

LEVEL
ONE



Feminism was the apple Eve bit into

*(a new play
proves it)*

Fear of German?

*A newly discovered German-Jewish woman writer
gets us to the other side*

Move Over, Elijah

Here Comes the Cult of the Prophetess Miriam!

A Therapist Reclaims Nagging

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Letty Cottin Pogrebin • Adrienne Rich • Susan Weidman Schneider • Susan Schnur

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LILITH

F E A T U R E S

7 **Body & Soul: Awake and Zen Out . . .**

by Susan Freeman

Maybe there's a reason why the traditional *siddur* has us begin each day with a pause for prayer before we leap out of bed and gulp down our power breakfasts. Tape your own voice and move through this guided meditation on awakening — gratefully — to each new day.

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a play by David Schechter

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by Yona Zeldis McDonough

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COVER: Nicole Hollander

SPRING 1992
VOL. 17, NO. 2

LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam: "After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, He created a woman, also from the earth, and called her 'Lilith.' Lilith said: "We are equal because we both come from the earth . . ."' (From *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b)

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In response to "The Power of Women's Folk Judaism" (Fall 1991), I offer the following story. When I was nine months pregnant with my second child, my firstborn, Aviva, was nearly three and at an age when she loved hearing a story read over and over. Thus it was that I had the opportunity to read her the story of Noah's ark about a hundred times. Somewhere around the hundredth time I heard the words "for forty days and forty nights" in a way I'd never heard them before. Here I sat, distended beyond recognition, when the subtext of this creation/destruction epic revealed itself.

I composed this Midrash: "For forty weeks, day and night, Noah and Nahmah's children floated in the waters of her womb. When her waters finally broke, all the creatures of the earth burst forth and fed from her breasts until she became dry."

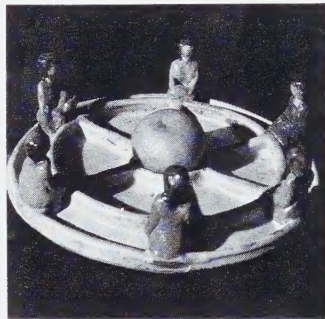
Suddenly, it was easy to recast all the images of the story through a woman's eyes. The ark protecting all the animals became my womb, and the flood was appropriated by the amniotic waters. It seemed more logical that the animals achieved their independence when the milk of the mother ark/womb dried up, as they do in real life.

DEBORAH KRUGER
Greenfield, Massachusetts

I am a woman of 77 who has been aware since I was a very young woman of the pressures women experience simply because they are women. Six years ago I started making menorahs consisting of women figures, in clay, in various configurations for my daughters, only to discover that there was a great emotional response to them from women of all ages. At the suggestion of a friend of mine I named them WOMENORAHs. I am not telling you this with the idea of selling you anything;

merely to lead up to another story related to Passover.

Not long ago a woman who had purchased one of these WOMENORAHs came to me with a request. A friend of hers had a rabbi who refused to allow the women in his congregation to participate at the altar during services. He said angrily, "A



Seder plate

woman belongs on the *bimah* [altar] like an orange belongs on a Seder plate!" That year all the women put an orange on their Passover seder plates. . . . The woman telling me the story asked me if I could make her a *Pesach* plate with women on it and a place for an orange, which I did.

Given the work LILITH does for Jewish women, I thought you might find this story interesting.

More power to women.

ELSIE GOLDSTEIN
Evanston, Illinois

P.S. By the way, I am not trying to sell you anything. Just sharing. LILITH adds: To order a seder plate (each costs \$80.00), contact Elsie Goldstein: 708-869-6429. By the way, LILITH is not trying to sell you anything. Just sharing.

There has been some confusion caused by a possible misapprehension in "New Ceremonies for: Turning 12 and Turning 60" [Fall 1988] describing Marcia Cohn Spiegel's "Becoming A Crone" ceremony. Subsequently this article has been referred to on various occasions, the latest being in Letty Cottin Pogrebin's book,

Deborah, Golda and Me.

The piece in LILITH failed to mention that I was the originator of the *Simhat Hohmah* ritual for myself in 1984. Spiegel later planned her own ceremony based entirely on mine (i.e.: life, kittel, vows and taking a new name and facing death); Drorah Setel conducted my services, Debbie Friedman wrote the theme song, *Lechi Lach* (with my words taken from Genesis 12), as well as four more blessings and songs, Marcia Falk wrote a blessing and so on.

This would not be serious except for the fact that my *Simhat Hohmah* is gaining attention. A full page picture with text has just been published in Circle of Life; the story of my *Simhat* is being published in Ellen Umansky's *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality, A Sourcebook*; *Lechi Lach* is very popular in L.A. and I am in the process of marketing a video of the ceremony.

The idea seems to be catching on, as I had hoped.

SAVINA J. TEUBEL
Santa Monica, California

I was surprised and concerned to open my winter issue of LILITH to the contents page and find my art work reproduced there, uncredited, cropped and out of context. This seemed particularly strange since I know LILITH has a policy of supporting artists and since, when I sent you my work over a year ago, I specifically asked that you contact me to discuss fees before you published anything of mine.

On searching the magazine, I discovered the same image on page 30, illustrating a book review. Although my name was included here, there was no title or explanation that this was original artwork, that it was done in fabric, or that it was in a Canadian setting. (In fact, this piece depicts Labor Zionists in a 1932 May Day Parade in

Winnipeg.) You also omitted my biographical information, although this is included for all the writers.

I do enjoy and support your magazine very much and I'm delighted that you like my work. I have worked in publishing myself and understand the mounting chaos of the week before press day. But the use of uncredited artwork in publications is rampant and a problem my colleagues and I have run up against many times and it must stop.

Most artists are among the lowest paid workers in North America. Only 2% actually make a living from their artwork. When this is combined with the poverty common to many women it leaves us low on the financial scale indeed. In my own case I do a delicate juggling act, working as an artist, as a parent, and as an income earner for myself and my children, all full time jobs.

As a Jewish feminist artist, I share many of the goals of your magazine. By considering each other's issues, we can build more effective alliances and have a more powerful impact in the world.

SIMA ELIZABETH SHEFRIN
Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Sima Elizabeth Shefrin has worked as a fabric artist for 15 years. Her works reflects a variety of political, feminist and multicultural concerns, including an ongoing exploration of her Canadian Jewish heritage.

As long as we're offering corrections, here are three more Al Chait's (apologies):

- Ita Aber's correct phone number is 914-968-4863. We featured her "Esther/Vashti" body ornament (Winter 1992).
- We failed to credit Andrea Sperling for her photographs of "Santa Faints" (Winter 1992) and Layle Silbert for her photograph of Grace Paley (Fall 1991, p. 24).

FROM THE EDITOR

Last month, after I'd agreed to give a talk to a Jewish women's group about changes Jewish women face in the 90's (or something like that), I began to look through my file drawer marked "speeches." The labels on the folders ranged from "J Superwoman" and "J women and J men" through "intermarriage," "abortion rights," "campus crises" and "Philanthropy '92." In each folder I found typed notes, scraps of papers with brilliant ideas scrawled illegibly on them, and lots of insights I had forgotten I'd had and was perfectly willing to recycle. Which caused me some alarm. Were the same ideas I'd had eight or more years ago still sounding fresh to me? Had women made so little impact on the Jewish community, and on society as a whole that my analyses of the female condition appeared timeless?

Two days later I had a phone call from a college student conducting interviews as part of her senior thesis. What did I think were the successes and failures of "the" Jewish women's movement? Where was "it" going? And what progress had I seen in the fifteen years LILITH has been publishing and the nearly twenty years I'd been lecturing? SIGH.

Major change has taken place. In religious life, certainly. In women's spiritual life, yes, and still more to come. In our personal relationships with women, and especially with men, the jury (the Jewry?) is still out. And in the Jewish community women are still grossly underrepresented, underrecognized, underestimated and underpaid.

But we can see major, significant change. Examples: Women's reproductive freedoms

are threatened and the National Abortion Rights Action League sends out a notice for the April 5 March on Washington and included on the roster of their supporters are mainstream Jewish women's groups; announcements of upcoming events all season have included information about where Sisterhood or Hadassah members can meet to march together. A heterosexual Jew-by-choice who is the president of her large synagogue lobbies for members to be more receptive to the gays and lesbians in the congregation. The Jewish women's caucus of the Association for Women in Psychology announces a conference on Jewish women's issues in psychology.

I remind myself that there have been other signs of progress, too. Adult Bat Mitzvah celebrants have worn a path to the synagogue door for men as well as for women; women's openness about wanting to be full participants in Jewish life has helped enfranchise marginal men also, enabling many of them to come forward and say that they too want to learn as adults. And this year's focus on Sephardic women in the pages of LILITH, underwritten in part by the Maurice Amado Foundation, is part of a growing understanding of the diversity of the Jewish experience. And more: LILITH's new project looking at the ways Jewish women try to change society through their philanthropy has generated queries from mainstream charities—most of whom are part of the appalling statistic that only 4% of U.S. foundation grants go to women's endeavors.

Yet this Spring issue of LILITH is not a polemical one. Here we celebrate quieter

realities and note some ripples in the fabric of women's lives. Women have been looking for new ways of celebrating Miriam in the seder story and a ceramicist was just waiting in the wings to create the Cup of Miriam. Something new for fortysomething? *Of course* there are rituals that draw on Jewish sources and that can be celebrated with men as well as with women. And then there's the figure of Lilith. We've seen her hovering around for two decades. In her incarnation in "Guarding the Garden" she speaks for us all when she speaks for the soil. Along with LILITH and Eve, we'd like to have the planet around for a while longer so that we can evaluate just how far we've come in bringing it closer to perfection.

Susan Weidman Schneider

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News — or no news — from Moscow

Food is the main concern and the main subject of conversation in Moscow: people just can't speak about anything else. Getting food has become a question of survival.

It was one of my first impressions: a crowd of people in front of the subway entrance. The subway is closed, nobody knows why. The next day I read in the newspaper: a man waiting for a train had dropped a package with a salami in it onto the track. Without a moment's hesitation he jumped down after it—right under the wheels of a coming train. Food has become more precious than life itself.

Not that there is a famine—not yet. There is still enough bread, and bread means life. But the fear of starvation is overwhelming. The panic itself is an important reason for the food shortage. To prepare themselves for the day when they really have absolutely nothing, people buy much more food than they need at the moment. This extra food occupies every spare inch in their homes and looks at you from the corners of the rooms, from the TV-sets, from bookshelves. "Let the famine begin, already. I have no room for any more food," is a joke one hears, expressing more than a little of the truth.

Ionescu and Kafka had to invent their stories. But in Moscow life itself has become a theater of the absurd. And what an astounding fantasy! You enter the meat store—only to find it sells women's panties. You enter the fish store and instead of fish they sell soccer balls. Good Lord, why soccer balls?! Who needs them now in this destroyed, decayed, dying society?

Life is especially hard for old or weak people, who cannot fight



Felix Dzerzhinsky — "Iron Felix," as Lenin called him; a security chief, taken from his pedestal in front of the famous "Lubyanka" KGB headquarters. Stalin's statue is at rear.

with stronger and more energetic ones in the lines. My friend the artist Mikhail Turovsky said, "A line resembles a scorpion; a long tail full of poison." But sometimes humanity and kindness win out. One of my former colleagues, while standing in line two hours for half a litre of sunflower oil suddenly felt a bad pain in her chest. The people in line turned out to be very kind to her. Instead of kicking her out of the line they laid her down on the floor near the cashier, and for two more hours she was not standing, but literally "lying in line," while her neighbors kept her place for her.

It is a nasty, cold, dark, and rainy winter day. I decide to go to the Central Market in Moscow to buy food for my father. He turned 93 the day of my arrival to Moscow; his wife is 78. The Central Market happened to be closed. The people who sold food there were on strike, protesting against the sale of the Central Market's facilities to a private company. In the street outside the Market, under the rain and in total darkness, some people were selling their goods, and I bought two and a half pounds of butter (for 200 rubles) and a chicken (for

70 rubles). My father's monthly pension is 320 rubles.

I returned home, put the chicken in water and started cooking it. Suddenly I realized that there was a big tumor on its belly. Never before had I seen anything like that. I called my sister, who is a doctor: "Please, come and diagnose this tumor", I said. Very likely it was cancerous, though it could have been just a cyst. But one thing was absolutely sure: this chicken had died its own death, without any external interference. Maybe it had been brought to Moscow from somewhere near Chernobyl. It went into the garbage together with the soup prepared from it. For a long time after that, I could not even think about eating non-vegetarian food.

A couple of days later I heard an amazing program on the radio. An epidemiologist was explaining that some pig disease was not contagious or dangerous for human beings. He claimed that sausages made from the pigs that had recently died in an epidemic were perfectly OK for people's dinners. But worst of all, the most heartbreaking were the long, silent lines in front of closed

stores. Nobody in the line knows what, if anything, they will find in the shop when it opens, if it opens at all. And they stand for hours and hours before the locked doors, hoping. . . .

These people are in distress and need help. And the help is coming! My sister's eight-year-old granddaughter told me proudly: "It is me who supports the whole family!" And that is true. Twice a month trucks with canned food come from Germany to a school yard. They give food directly into the hands of the children. This is the only way to give help to those who need it. Everything that comes to the country through the central distribution network is stolen and ends up on the black market, where only the wealthiest can afford to shop.

These desperate, hungry, exhausted and aggressive people are looking for somebody to blame for their disaster. It is the Russian way to look for a scapegoat. The traditional scapegoat in Russia is, of course, Russian Jews. But the face of anti-semitism has drastically changed during the past years. It is no longer governmental anti-semitism: it does not trickle down from above. Anti-semitism today is a grassroots phenomenon, the anti-semitism of the masses.

This year some Russian Jews celebrated Hanukkah in a most extraordinary way, openly, not somewhere in a small synagogue or an apartment but in the very heart of Russia, in the Palace of Congresses in the Kremlin! The Palace was converted to a synagogue, as it were, by erecting a *mehitza* to create men's and women's sections. I did not reserve a ticket for this celebration, but went to the Kremlin anyway, hoping to buy one on the spot. I did not get one, but I didn't regret going there. I had a most extraordinary experience.

We were met near the Kremlin by the people of "Pamyat" (*Memory*): a bunch of hysterical women and men with faces wrapped in handkerchiefs. They carried slogans and were shouting:

"Zhids! [*Jews!*] You stink! Go and wash your asses!"

"Zhids! Into the gas chambers! Your place is there!"

I photographed them and their slogans. Two especially loud women ran up to me. One of them tried to push me, while shouting "To the gas chamber! Your place is in the gas chamber!"

The other one shouted, menacingly: "Where is my nail-headed club?"

She stopped her shouting suddenly and said in surprise, "Oh! Hello, Natasha!" She was a former colleague of mine from the Institute of Chemical Physics of the Soviet Academy of Sciences!

That was an encounter! She was confused for a moment, then recovered and said maliciously, "Aha! At least you did not manage to get a ticket to our Holy Place!"

I did not respond, and turned away. I had seen enough.

— *Natalya Rapoport*

Women's Voices, Women's Images

Carol Hamoy, whose one-woman art exhibit on the theme of "Kol Ishah—Women's Voices" appeared in Manhattan's Ceres Gallery earlier this year, credits this column in LILITH with inspiring her latest work.

Judaism and feminism intersect in her work, which, she says, is increasingly motivated by Jewish themes.

Hamoy constructs works mounted on wood or free-standing, using old photographs, personal memorabilia, fabrics and textiles, treasures from flea markets and dumpsters, mirrors and beads, postcards, dried flowers and paint, as well as Jewish ritual objects and pages from prayerbooks. Having grown



Detail from Carol Hamoy's
"Voices 8/Sister"

up in a family involved in the garment industry, "it seems I've come full circle," she said, recalling her childhood days of playing with buttons and scraps of fabric.

Hamoy's Jewish expression represents another full circle in her life. A child of a "traditional Jewish family in which the education and careers of girl children were not important," Hamoy grew up ambivalent about her religion. But fifteen years ago, when a friend took her to a Fast of Esther service before Purim held by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb in New York City, her attitude changed dramatically. "I was instantly captivated by this rabbi," she recalls. Hamoy became devoted to Rabbi Gottlieb and her traveling *minyan*, joining her for a vegetarian Passover seder and Yom Kippur services in an old synagogue-turned-dance studio on Eldridge Street on the Lower East Side. Hamoy studied Hebrew with Rabbi Gottlieb, and decided at age 48 to have a Bat Mitzvah. "It was the first time my Orthodox mother-in-law had seen the Torah up close, and the first time my mother was called to the Torah."

"Wonder Women" are captivating, free-standing constructions representing five women from the Jewish tradition, including Dinah and the Sabbath Bride. "Had I known these women existed, I might have had an earlier interest in Judaism," Hamoy admits.

Hamoy has also created pieces in series on Lilith and Tamar ("A

Womb of Her Own"), has just completed a wrenching series on the Holocaust, and is planning a series on goddesses, inspired "not by the Greek gods and goddesses, but by small Canaanite and Ancient Near Eastern goddesses, like amulets to Lilith, for example."

Hamoy is a founding member of a support group for Jewish women artists; the participants meet monthly to discuss books they read together, topics in religion, being Jewish daughters and mothers, and other issues of Jewish identity. The diverse group includes religious to secular women from Germany, Mexico, Israel and the U.S., book artists, photographers, painters, sculptors, printmakers, and collagists. The oldest member is near 70, the youngest is in her 30s. Hamoy, who recently collaborated on a Jewish holiday project with another member, says, "Not all of us work with Jewish themes, but we all discuss how Judaism affects our art."

"Voices" and "Wonder Women" will be travelling to the May Museum on Long Island and to other locations throughout the year.

— *Lainie Blum-Cogan*

Visiting Moms

People don't think of childbirth as a crisis, but for more people than not, it is. There are wonderful moments of joy, but it's such an extreme change — which is what a crisis is. Everything is thrown off. Often, there's nobody around to normalize that for the parents, and I think that's a large part of our work," says Peggy Kaufman, the creator of Boston's innovative Visiting Moms volunteer program.

Convinced that the Jewish community could have a role in preventing crises that lead to family turmoil and destruction, the Kargman Family Foundation made a pilot grant to the JFCS, and Visiting Moms was born.

In building the non-sectarian

outreach program, Kaufman followed the model of the National Parent Aide Network, a crisis intervention organization, but emphasizes, "We wanted a program without a crisis stigma. Visiting Moms trains an experienced mother to reach out her heart and hand to another mother" in a relaxed and sociable way, providing supportive conversation, the benefit of experience, and information about specific services the community offers. The program addresses the needs of mothers whose role-strain may be exacerbated by isolation from an extended family, limited financial resources, restricted parental leave and career pressures, delayed childbearing and single motherhood.

Kaufman estimates that 85 percent of the volunteers are Jewish, 60 percent of the families served are Jewish, and 70 percent of those visited are first-time mothers. The program serves two functions at the same time: it is a vehicle for Jewish women to reach



"Before She Was
My Mother," by Sherry
Karver, mixed media,
clay and wood.

out to women of other religious and ethnic backgrounds, and it recognizes that Jewish women themselves are not only service providers but are also clients of this innovative service. Women in highly mobile professional families may find themselves having their first child in a city far removed from where their own parents or siblings live. And because Jewish women tend to

start having children later in life than the majority of American women (correlated with the high number of years they spend in college and graduate school), new parents may find that their own parents are too old to play active roles as advisers, sitters, or referral systems.

The free program currently involves 24 volunteers, aged 28 to 70, who engage in bi-weekly, one-on-one visitations with 24 families. Volunteers include women with young children, part-time career women with teenage children, empty-nesters, and grandparents whose own adult children live far away from Boston. It is their role, according to the official Visiting Mom job description, to "establish a nurturing and supportive relationship with the new mother, to act as a positive role model for appropriate parenting, to recognize and reinforce the mother's own strengths . . . [and] to help build self-esteem and competence in the mother so she can develop an ongoing healthy relationship with her baby." In addition, the volunteer visitors give information about community services such as health care facilities and babysitters.

The visiting mom learns about "the cultural expectations of parenting and how far the popular images are from the realities, and how this often leaves parents feeling even more isolated," says Kaufman. The volunteer also learns about the causes and correlates of child abuse and neglect as well as how to use the community's resources. Volunteers receive ongoing bi-weekly training throughout their visiting year.

Isabel Sodickson, a clinical social worker and Visiting Moms volunteer, recently began visiting her third family. As a social worker and mother of now grown children, Sodickson was "especially attracted to the program because I see it as an exciting way to contribute to the prevention of family problems as well as to foster good family relationships." Sodickson found

her second experience "especially rewarding." She explains, "This was a woman who was quite isolated from her own family—newly married, in a new home in a new community, where she knew nobody. She faced a number of significant difficulties during her first year that really could have compromised her ability to respond to her baby's needs. During my final visit, she acknowledged to me her great relief and pleasure at her awareness that she's now feeling genuinely comfortable and competent as a mother. I was delighted to see her new optimism toward her future."

According to Sodickson, fathers are generally supportive and see the program as a valuable family resource. If the father is home during the visit, or if he is the primary home caretaker, he is involved in the program. Visiting Moms is currently planning separate group programs just for fathers. Additionally, the program provides a weekly support group for the new mothers, where they can share their feelings and concerns, problems and solutions.

There is a one-year visitation limit, due, in part, to overwhelming demand. "We restrict visitation to one year because the program is targeted to early post-partum motherhood." With a grant from the Sherman Family Foundation, Kaufman plans to expand Visiting Moms from its original six towns to eight additional towns south of Boston.

"I would love to see something like this in every community," concluded Sodickson. "Unfortunately, we're seeing a reduction in resources from people's own extended families, and there's a strong need for communities to offer these kinds of support services."

—Lainie Blum-Cogan

Israel's Abused Children

On the opening day of the International Conference on Child Abuse held in Jerusalem in November 1991, a 32-year-old Haifa

policeman was charged with assault after banging his eight-year-old son's head against a wall. Unfortunately the incident was not mere coincidence; such reports increasingly appear in the Israeli press.

Close to 25,000 children (1.5 percent of the child population) are abused in Israel every year, according to a recent survey by the American Joint Distribution Committee. While every case is regrettable, Israel's statistics are far below those of other developed countries. But fears of a possible increase have spurred Israel into legislative action. And Israel is, in fact, now amongst the most advanced in the world in terms of legislation to protect the child.

The three-day event, the first of its kind, drew over 250 participants from 14 countries, many of them leading experts in their fields. The eighty sessions ranged from the various forms of prevention and handling to medical and legal issues. Dr. Hanita Zimrin, director of ELI, the Israel Association for the Protection of Children, is heartened by a mounting public awareness of the problem: "Until recently, child abuse was greeted in Israel with outright denial," she says. "When I raised the topic 20 years ago, I was dismissed as a crazy woman."

The assumption that Jewish parents don't abuse their children was so strong that up until two years ago, according to Dr. Yitzhak Kadman, Executive Director of the National Council for the Child in Israel, "Child abuse was considered an internal family matter and not even classified as a criminal offense." Today, child abuse is a felony carrying stiffer sentences when the offender is the child's primary caretaker.

According to Kadman, the turning point occurred in 1989 following the death of three-year-old Moran Danamiam from Tiberias, whose uncle had physically abused her, eventually causing her death. The incident caused a public

outcry, and within nine months a series of changes and amendments were enacted in the Israeli law.

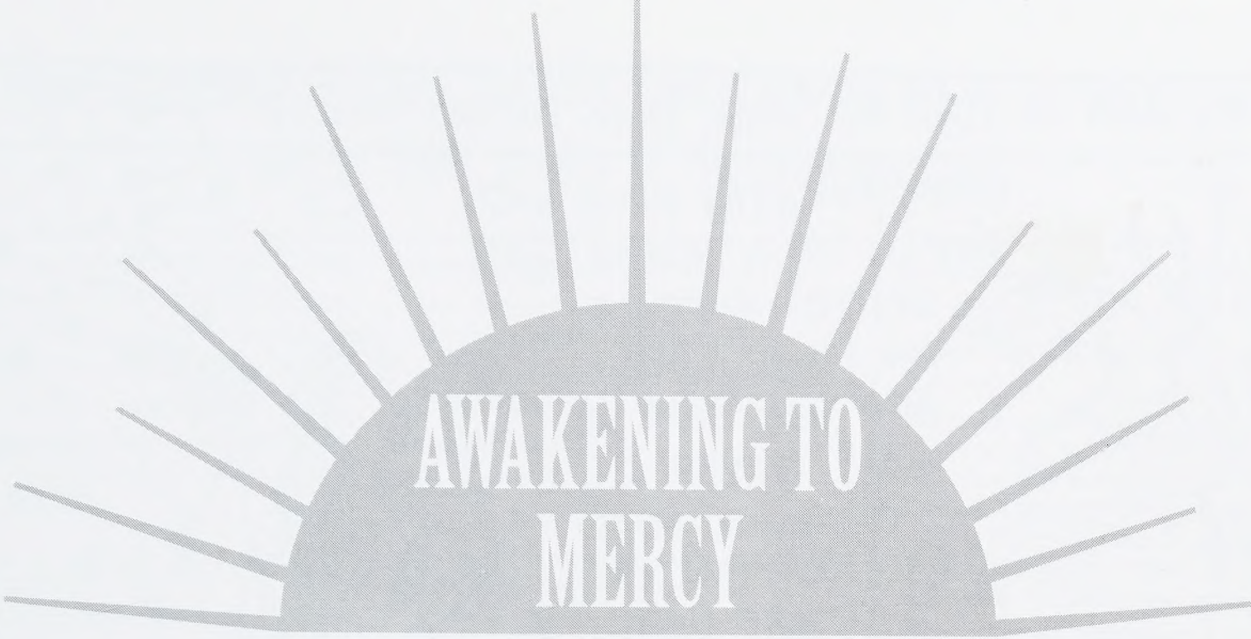
The Mandatory Reporting Law obliges parents and childcare professionals, as well as neighbors, to report even a suspicion of child abuse to the police or a social welfare agent. Says Kadman: "It is now a legal and not simply moral imperative to report such cases." Failure to report is a criminal offense.

According to Miriam Faber, head of the Social Welfare Ministry's department of child protective services, the number of cases reported over the past two years has doubled, and in some areas has increased fivefold. This is in part due to the tremendous publicity the law has received. Eighty percent of the calls to ELI's hotline are made by the perpetrators themselves.

Children under 14 are protected by the Israeli law both from police interrogation and from testifying in court. A closed interview is carried out by a special youth interrogator, who may even testify in court on the child's behalf. Thirty-six years have passed since this law's enactment, and according to Tamar Morag, Legal Director of the National Council for the Child, "In spite of having undergone a number of amendments, it remains a highly original piece of legislation. Its main innovation is that it excludes hearsay evidence and denies the right to cross-examination," says Morag, "something which exists nowhere else in the world." This minimalizes the emotional damage to the child, while improving the chances of prosecution.

Other innovations in the law empower the court to remove the offender from the courtroom when a child does testify in court and to order a violent family member out of the home, as opposed to the more common practice of removing the child from the threatening environment.

—Shelley Kleiman



AWAKENING TO MERCY

An Early Morning Meditation • by Susan Freeman

Traditionally, we recite prayers as soon as we wake up, thanking God for restoring our soul to us in the morning ("Modeh Ani Lehfahnecha"). As a parallel to these prayers, I've written this meditation as a Jewish spiritual resource for people who are dealing with loss and grief, with pain, with life-threatening or chronic illness, or simply with the difficulties of day-to-day living.

This meditation begins first thing in the morning, right after you wake up, before you get out of bed. Sleep has just left your body; you are still lying down.

Though you are awake, recall the feeling of the sound protectiveness, the deep relaxation of sleep. Languish in this recollection, re-experiencing that deep relaxation for a few moments.

Now reach back further to an even deeper memory in which the feeling of protectiveness was more encompassing, where you were suspended in an environment of no resistance, no tension; only comfort.

This deeper sense of protectiveness is a sphere, a womb of mercy — *rachamim*. Imagine you are encompassed in a sphere of protectiveness, encircled in comfort and calm. No resistance, no tensions.

From the womb — *rechem* — you have known mercy — *rachamim*. When you were born, as with each time you awake, you become aware that from the womb, The Merciful One, *HaRachaman*, is present. You say, "I became Your charge at birth; from my mother's womb You have been my God." "*Alecha hashlachti may-rechem mibeten imi eili atah.*" (Psalms 22:11)

Come back now to this present moment of awakening. Very slowly and gently sit up. Awake to mercy. Experience the sphere, the womb of mercy encompassing your body. "... God surrounds you with steadfast love and mercy." "*Ha-me-atreichi chesed v'rachamim.*" (Psalms 103:4)

Breathe in deeply. Allow the mercy—*rachamim*, that surrounds you like a womb—*rechem*, to fill your lungs... Breathe in mercy and feel how it permeates your skin; soaks into your bones... Continue breathing in mercy, allowing it to soften your heart...

When you are ready, slowly and gently stand up. (If you are unable to stand, simply continue working with the imagery in a sitting or lying

down position.) Feel the mercy still surrounding you. It is radiant, pouring into you — spilling onto your head; sinking into your shoulders... Feel it streaming into your back; your chest—flowing over you, into you, upon you. "... And mercy is upon all of God's works."

"... *V'rachamav al-kol-ma'asav.*" (Psalms 145:9)

Very gently, twist in your waist, back and forth, your arms hanging loosely from your shoulder sockets. As you twist, your arms will be swinging slightly like a pendulum — curving and dropping, curving and dropping... As you continue to twist, allow your arms to rise a little bit more, swinging in a fuller curve around your body — gently up and down, up and down... Your arms are outlining the sphere of mercy that surrounds you. Slowly, draw the sphere of mercy around you a couple of more times, then allow your arms to return to stillness.

You are filled now with a sense of loving calm. The mercy, absorbed so deeply inside of you, has nourished your inner strength. Feel the core of inner strength along the length of your body — from the top of your head, through the center of your being, down to the ground. Feel yourself tall; strengthened, loved.

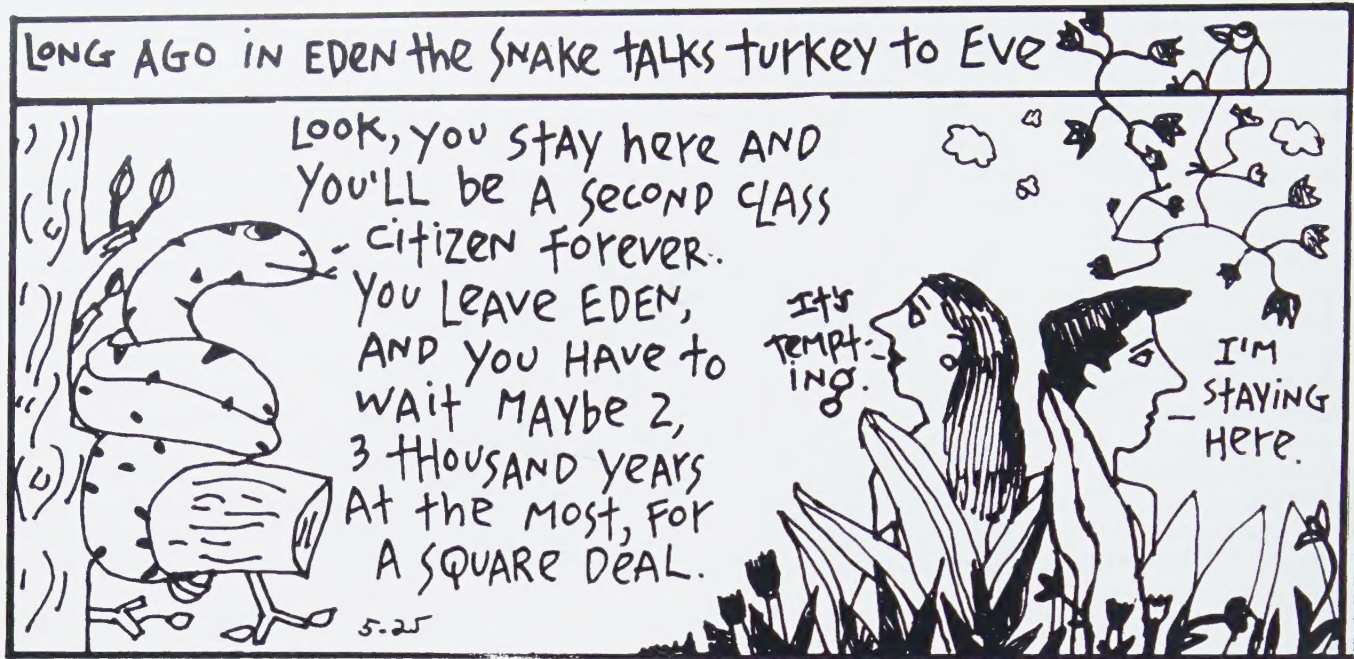
"The Eternal's kindness has not ended, nor mercies spent. They are renewed every morning. Ample is Your grace!" "*Chasdei Adonai ki lo-tamnu ki lo-chalu rachamav. Chadashim labkarim rabah*

emunatecha." (Lamentations 3: 22-23)

When you are ready, open your eyes and begin your day.

LILITH suggests that you tape your own voice reciting this meditation, then play it back to yourself when you wake up in the morning. For the right meditative feel, include the Hebrew phrases, too, even if you don't understand all the words.

Susan Freeman is the rabbi of Congregation Shir HeHarim, Brattleboro, Vermont. She is the co-author of Torah in Motion: Creating Dance Midrash (Alternatives in Religious Education, Denver, 1989), and she serves on the executive board of the Jewish Healing Center.



GUARDING THE GARDEN

AN
ECO-FEMINIST
PLAY



... In which women of Eden (Lilith and Eve) have their own God (a.k.a. Shekhina) who is different from the men's version. In which the snake is a friend (none other than Lilith). And in which the redemption — planetary, social and personal — exists within Creation, after all.

BOTH ADAM AND LILITH NOTICE THEIR HANDS ARE COVERED WITH dirt. SHE LOVES IT. HE LOATHES IT.

Who says feminists can't be funny? Who says Adam and Eve don't need Deborah Tannen? The following are excerpts from David Schechter's screwball musical comedy (music and lyrics by Margot Stein Azen), one of the most intelligent Jewish renderings of eco-feminism that we've yet seen.



(ADAM and LILITH are walking around pointing to things in the Garden, debating what to name them.)

ADAM: "Air eater."

LIL: "Feather head."

ADAM: "Bird!"

LIL: *(In agreement)* "Bird!"

LIL: "Green hand."

ADAM: "Bug airport."

LIL: "Bug airport?!"

ADAM: "Leaf."

(Both ADAM and LILITH notice their hands are covered with earth. She loves it, he loathes it.)

ADAM: "Blucchhh!"

LIL: "Muchum!"

ADAM: "Dirt!"

LIL: "Soil!"

ADAM: "Dirt!"

LIL: "Soil!"

ADAM: "DIRT!"

LIL: "SOIL!"

(ADAM climbs tree to talk to the big voice in the sky.)

ADAM: It's "dirt." Right, Voice? Isn't it "dirt?" Tell her it's not called soil, it's called. . . . Why don't I go invent a what? A wheel? Hmmm . . .

(Suddenly, LILITH hears the voice of SHEKHINA, the Tree of Life theme, coming from the soil. She puts her ear to the ground.)

ADAM: What are you doing down there?

LIL: Nothing, I just thought I heard. . . . what are YOU doing up THERE?

ADAM: I'm trying to figure out how to invent a wheel.

LIL: What's a wheel?

ADAM: I don't know yet.

LIL: Why do you need to invent anything? There's so much here already!

ADAM: Yeah, well that's just it. Creation is so impressive, I wanna try my hand at it, too.

LIL: At what?

ADAM: At creating.

LIL: Oh. Well, don't create too much, or it's going to get pretty crowded around here, don't you think? Look, Adam, there's a whole bunch more of those . . . those green things.

ADAM: "Leafs."

LIL: "Leafs," that's right. Well, they're everywhere. Aren't they beautiful? Ooo! Look at this! There's something shining here. It's wonderful — like a cloud stretched between these leafs. What is it?

ADAM: I dunno. You found it, YOU name it.

LIL: I can name it?

ADAM: Yeah, sure. I guess it won't hurt if you name something once in a while.

LIL: That's mighty of you. Let me think — I'll call it . . . uh . . . this is hard! How do you do this all the time?

ADAM: I get help from the big voice up there.

LIL: Really? *(She shouts to the sky.)* Hello! Hello! Can you help me please? Can you even hear me? *(Tree of Life theme, SHEKHINA's voice, is heard. LILITH puts her ear to the ground again.)*

Hello? Hello? I hear the voice down here!

EVE: *(To audience)* Then, once again, Lilith heard the voice she'd heard before. It seemed to come from the ground, from the roots, from the blades of grass and the leaves. It was a different voice from the one Adam heard. It was the voice of Shekhina.

LIL: There it goes again. Can't you hear it? Listen, Adam!

ADAM: You definitely have an overactive imagination. There's no voice down there. The only voice is up . . .

LIL: SHHH! I'm trying to hear what she's saying. Could you please go...climb that "leaf-holder" or something?

ADAM: It's not a "leaf-holder!" It's a "tree." And I think I figured out a way to build a house up in it, so that if the "river" ever

floods the Garden, you won't get wet.

LIL: Gee, thanks. What's a "river"?

ADAM: You know, that long wet thing you like to soak in.

LIL: Shekhina! Are you still there? *(Ear back to ground)* Yes, yes, we love it here! Creation is really beautiful! And Adam's been inventing all kinds of useful things, so it's been lovely. The reason I called is that we found this shining, cloudlike thing between two leaves and I was gonna name it but I . . .

ADAM: *(In tree)* Shhh! Keep your voice down! The "souffle" I just invented will fall!

LIL: *(Whispering)* Sorry! I just wanted to tell you that Shekhina says that . . .

ADAM: "Shekhina?" Who's "Shekhina?"

LIL: She's the voice I've been telling you about, and she says that the shining thing I saw, well, she says the spider made it, so the spider should name it, since that's what's fair.

ADAM: Back up, will ya? There is NO VOICE down there. The voice is up here.

LIL: Adam, I'm telling you . . .

ADAM: And I'm telling YOU, there is nothing down there but dirt!

LIL: It's not "dirt!" It's "SOIL!" *(She turns to audience.)* "Soil."

ADAM: How could the ground, or a spider, have anything to say?

LIL: How come your voice has something to say but my voice doesn't have anything to say?

ADAM: It's not MY voice or YOUR voice, it's THE voice. And if it doesn't talk to you, I'm sorry.

LIL: Well, clearly there's more than one voice!

ADAM: There can't be more than one voice.

LIL: Why not? There's more than one leaf, we keep finding more. Why can't there be more than one voice?

ADAM: There's no end to your arrogance.

LIL: Arrogance! ARROGANCE! And just what is "arrogance," please?

ADAM: It's claiming to hear voices where they don't exist.

LIL: You're just jealous because you don't hear Shekhina, and maybe the spider and the

LILITH: How come YOU HEAR A divine voice from HEAVEN, AND I HEAR A divine voice from the EARTH?

leaves and I can hear her. Look, I don't wanna talk about it anymore. I'm getting very upset. I'm gonna go soak for a while in the long wet thing.

ADAM: "River."

LIL: On second thought, I'm gonna go find some Pepperidge Farm cookies.

ADAM: What's "Pepperidge Farm cookies?"

LIL: I don't know, but whenever you get me feeling like this, I wanna eat a whole lot of them. *(She storms off and we hear her crash into something.)* Adam?! What's this thing in my way?

ADAM: I call it a "fence."

LIL: A "fence?" When did you find it?

ADAM: I didn't find it. I built it.

LIL: You BUILT it? Why?!

ADAM: To guard the Garden. It's a jungle out there. We need protection, ya know.

LIL: *(Reappearing on stage)* Protection? Against what?

ADAM: Against wild things. Like your "Shekhina." And "shakhane."

LIL: "Shakhane?"

ADAM: Neighbors.

LIL: "Neighbors?" What's that?

ADAM: It's whoever we have to guard the Garden from.

LIL: You mean we're not the only ones?! You take down that fence! I wanna go find them.

ADAM: No way!

LIL: Look, Adam. I just want to explore. I want to look for some more of those shining, cloudlike things the spider made.

ADAM: Well, I'm not taking down the fence, so you can't leave the Garden. I'm in charge here.

LIL: Excuse me, you're WHAT?

ADAM: I'm in charge.

LIL: Excuse me, you are NOT in charge here!

ADAM: Oh no? Who is then? You?!

LIL: Me?! Shekhina forbid!

ADAM: Well, the big voice talks to me, I know the rules, so I'm in charge.

LIL: I'm outta here.

ADAM: What?!

LIL: Outta here! OUT! Gone! History! Vamoose!!

ADAM: You can't go. I just built you a closet for all your shoes!

LIL: Shoes? What are "shoes?"

ADAM: *(Grabbing her feet)* You know, "shoes!"

LIL: You mean those weird things you wanted me to walk in? I hate them! I hate them! I don't know what they are and I hate them!

ADAM: What do you mean? They keep the shmutz off your feet.

LIL: It isn't "shmutz!" It's "SOIL!"

ADAM: Soil, shmoil! You're not allowed to go. It's against the rules and I won't let you.

LIL: You are unbelievable! GOODBYE! *(She leaves.)*

ADAM: LILITH! How are you going to get through the fence?!

LIL: *(Offstage)* I'll invent a gate!

ADAM: You're gonna DIE out there!! *(To sky)* Voice! VOICE!! What am I gonna do without her?

(There is a cymbal crash and ADAM collapses to the ground, fast asleep. He begins clutching his side and muttering about his rib. Simultaneously, EVE appears with the high-heeled shoes ADAM made for LILITH. She is like a child trying to figure out what to do with a new toy. Finally she realizes they fit on her feet and she hobbles over to ADAM.)

EVE: Adam! Adam, wake up!

ADAM: *(Opening his eyes)* Who are you?

EVE: I just wanna say thanks for the closet full of shoes!

LIL: *(Popping her head around the set)* You gave someone ELSE a closet full of shoes?! Men are pigs!

ADAM: What?!

LIL: Nothing. I just thought I'd make up a cliché that'll last about three billion years.

ADAM: Get lost! *(She does. He turns back to EVE.)* So, you really like the shoes?

EVE: Well, they're a little hard to walk in because they have these funny little stick-things on the back, but if you like them, I'm sure I can get used to them, with a little practice.

LIL: *(Offstage)* Hey you with the shoes! Come here, I want to introduce you to Shekhina!

ADAM: Don't listen to her, she's crazy! She listens to weird things.

EVE: Like what?

ADAM: Like dirt.

EVE: What do you mean, "She listens to dirt?"

ADAM: She puts her ear in the dirt and rubs it around and thinks that she hears things.

EVE: *(Trying it)* What do you mean?

ADAM: NO! No, don't try it!

LIL: Why not?

ADAM: Because . . . because . . . I said so. Because . . . because . . . I'm in charge . . . because . . . the voice is up!

EVE: Oh.

ADAM: Jeesh. It was never that easy with Lilith.

LIL: *(Reappearing)* *(To EVE)* What's your name? *(To ADAM)* Did you give her a name yet?

ADAM: I was about to when you came along.

LIL: I'll give you a name. Let me think . . . "Web!" That's what we'll call you, "Web." That's what I was going to call the shining, cloudlike thing the spider made, but we decided the spider should name that.

EVE: *(A little depressed)* "Web?"

LIL: So, Web, let me fill you in a little, tell you how it was for Adam and me.

ADAM: Ancient history!

LIL: We were hanging out in the Garden, having a swell time, I mean, I was anyway and then I heard this voice called Shekhina. But this voice wasn't coming from where Adam said his voice came from, so he got all threatened and claimed to be "in charge." But, Shekhina said that no one was actually "in charge," but that the way it all works is more like . . . like the shiny, cloudlike thing the spider made that I was gonna call a "web" before we decided to call YOU, "Web". . . see, Shekhina says that Creation is more like that, like a "web"—if I'd called it a "web"—which we all weave together, where no one's supposed to be really, like, "in charge."

ADAM: *(Brandishing his stick)* Get out of

ADAM: It's NOT YOURS OR MINE. It's THE voice. AND if it doesn't TALK to you, I'M SORRY.

here, before I use my "poke-thing" on you!

LIL: Oh, now you're back to the "poke-thing!"

ADAM: I'm warning you, out! OUT!

EVE: Wait, Adam. I wanna know more!

LIL: (To EVE) Come with me! If you stay here, I guarantee he'll start telling you all kinds of things you can and cannot do!

EVE: I'm frightened! I don't know what to do!

LIL: Ask Shekhina! She'll help you out! (To EVE) Listen, I won't forget you! I promise I'll be back! (She runs off.)



(Later . . . LILITH appears on stage alone, followed by EVE playing SHEKHINA)

LIL: (Eating cookies from bag) Shekhina! Shekhina! I'm worried about the garden. He never really takes the time to listen to it and to care what it has to say. He just names it and uses it and walks on it and fences things in and dams things up. And she — this Web — is learning some pretty bad habits from him. You've got to do something. Please make Adam listen to your voice!

SHEK: (Played by EVE) He can't hear my voice down here. He only hears it from the sky, and thinks it promises him eternal life in the garden.

LIL: Then make her listen.

SHEK: She can't hear my voice either. She's too afraid of losing Adam.

LIL: If I can live without him, so can Web.

SHEK: She now calls herself "Life". She's going to be the Mother of All Life. Hava. Eve.

LIL: Wait a minute, Shekhina. She's gonna be the Mother of All Life?

SHEK: Yeah, it didn't seem like you had the temperament for all those diapers.

LIL: You're right.

SHEK: But she's got to understand that if she and Adam keep treating the garden the way they do, life will not survive.

LIL: So what are you going to do about it?

SHEK: What are you going to do, Lilith?

LIL: Me? I'm out of it, remember? (Throws empty bag of cookies on ground)

SHEK: You're far from out of it, though your role has changed. And don't litter. What you do still affects the garden. Only you can go back and talk to Eve, and only she can

open Adam's ears.

LIL: But how can I even get near her? Adam won't let me back in the garden, and if he catches me there, well he's getting pretty handy with that stick-thing. How can I sneak back in?

(Mysterious underscoring creeps in as EVE/ SHEKHINA takes a prayer shawl, transforms it into the skin of a serpent, and wraps LILITH in it.)



(EVE reappears as EVE in high heels.)

EVE: Adam? Adam? (Sees Adam's not around) Oh, good! (She removes shoes.) Veyismeer! Oy, my feet! My poor, poor feet!

LIL: (In tree) Psst! Psst! Eve!

EVE: Who's that? Where are you?

LIL: Over here, in the tree. It's me, Lilith.

EVE: Lilith? Is that you?! I wouldn't have recognized you. You've changed your look.

LIL: Yeah, well, I wanted to try something with a little more pizzazz — snake skin.

EVE: Well, it's very slinky.

LIL: Thanks.

EVE: Listen, I'm sorry about how Adam treated you last time. He can get a little stubborn.

LIL: Thanks, but it's not how he treats me that I'm worried about, Eve. It's how you and he treat the garden.

EVE: Why are you calling me EVE? What about Web? Really, I've decided to call myself Life.

LIL: Well, that makes sense. Shekhina says that you're going to be the Mother of All Life and that's what Eve means.

EVE: She said that? The Mother of ALL Life? Really?!

LIL: Well, I guess all HUMAN life.

EVE: Gosh, I'd better start doing some menu planning. Of course, I'll get Adam to cook . . .

LIL: Shekhina was right about you being the one for the job.

EVE: You know, if I become the Mother of All Life, Adam will have to pay more attention to me.

LIL: Doesn't he pay attention to you now?

EVE: Sometimes, but mostly he's off inventing things. And then I start to feel so lonely. And when I tell him, he just gives me whatever new things he's made and I know I'm supposed to feel grateful and satisfied and everything, but somehow I still feel so . . .

LIL: Disconnected?

EVE: Yeah.

LIL: Eve, if you eat the fruit of this tree, you won't have to feel disconnected anymore.

EVE: Eat the fruit? Adam said I can't even touch that tree!

LIL: Why not?

EVE: Because he said the Voice told him that if we touched it, we would surely die.

LIL: I'm touching it and I haven't died, though some day I will. We all will. Whether we touch the tree or not. But Eve, that's nothing to be afraid of.

EVE: But if I die, who will feed all those children you say I'm going to have?

LIL: If you and Adam take good care of the garden, and teach those children to take good care of the garden, then it will continue to flourish even after you and he and I are all gone. Then future generations will still be nourished. You see it's all this incredible series of cycles.

EVE: How do I know I can trust you?

LIL: Don't take my word for it, Eve. Taste the fruit yourself and you'll know what I say is true. Your loneliness will begin to dissolve as you start to understand your place in this marvelous web of creation. This tree breathes your stale breath and returns to you fresh air. From the soil, the tree produces fruit for you and your family to eat. And you in turn replenish the soil. The fruit contains the seed and the seed contains the tree. What goes around comes around, all around this fruit. Taste it, Eve, Mother of All, it's juice is sweet with truth.

(EVE reaches into the Tree and pulls out the Torah. She hugs it to her and kisses it.)

To book the full performance of *GUARDING THE GARDEN* with Teva Troupe actors Margot Stein Azen, Michele Osherow and David Azen, contact Marilyn Gilbert Artists Management, 516 E. Wadsworth Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119.



Why I
LOVE/HATE
the
GERMAN
LANGUAGE

BY YONA
ZELDIS
McDONOUGH

By the beginning of my senior year at college, I had decided not only to major in art history, but to apply to graduate school as well. My advisor encouraged me to take German; it was essential for graduate study in my field and I might as well get an early start. I knew she had only my welfare in mind, but she had obviously not considered that for a Jew of the post-Holocaust generation such a suggestion was not as morally neutral as she intended.

The fact was, I had no desire to study German. No, that is an understatement: I bitterly resented the idea, and it was only after I had been completely convinced that the attainment of an advanced art history degree could not be accomplished without it, that I relented.

My first German teacher was not the blond, blue-eyed Aryan I had dreaded. Instead, he was olive-skinned and dark-haired, with bright black eyes and terrifyingly white teeth. Interspersed with his dutiful presentation of the complicated declensions and unwieldy compound nouns, he told witty tales about Teutonic life, culture and art. He lovingly evoked the coffee houses of Vienna with their *Sachertorte* and *Kaffee mit Schlagsahne* (coffee with whipped cream), the *Weinstube* (wine cellars) famous for their heady, German brews, and the dazzling *Oktoberfeste*.

The class was delighted with his fanciful excursions; he was adored by everyone. Everyone, that is, except me. Four mornings a week, I sat at the back of the classroom nursing my sullen silence. I didn't want to hear about German culture—too many of my relatives had perished as a result of that culture gone berserk; too many people I knew or had read about had suffered too much for me to take an innocent pleasure in any of this. I felt like I knew too much already, and my knowledge both embittered me and prevented me from wanting to know anything more.

One day, the professor asked if he could see me alone for a few minutes. I lowered my eyes, refusing to meet his, and waited until we were the only two left in the room.

"It seems to me that you're unhappy in my class," he said pleasantly. "Is there something I can do to help?" I finally looked at him then, his open, friendly face, filled with such unmistakable good will. Without any warning, I burst into tears. It all came spilling out then: how repelled I was by Germans and all things German, how I didn't want to be in the course at all. "I can see that you're very upset," he said when I had finished, "but I think you're making a mistake by condemning a whole culture because of one black period in history." He tried to tell me then about the other Germany, the one of Bach and Beethoven, Heine and Mozart, but I wouldn't or maybe couldn't hear.

I passed through the rest of the course cherishing my isolation. I didn't even mind the "C" I received, so noticeable amid my bevy of "A"s. On the contrary, I was perversely proud of it, like a badge of honor, or even, perhaps, a stigma.



Gertrud Kolmar

Gertrud Kolmar, born Gertrud Chodziesner in 1894 in Berlin, has been largely forgotten. Still, those few who do know her work consider her to be one of the greatest Jewish women poets. Cynthia Ozick writes that, "the American poet she is most likely to remind us of is Emily Dickinson—not so much for her stoic singleness, the heroism

of a loneliness teeming with phantasmagorical seeing, but for the daring pressure she puts on language in order to force a crack in the side of the planet, letting out strange figures and fires: she is a mythologist."

Kolmar, whose upbringing was actually comfortable and middle-class, published her first collection of verse at age seventeen. Over the next fifteen years she produced dazzling poetry—her poetic themes centering on the nature and passions of woman and the sensual wonders of nature. In her forties she taught herself Hebrew and wrote many poems in that language, though not a single one has survived.

Throughout the 1930's, Kolmar often talked of leaving Germany, but she was reluctant to abandon the elderly father for whom she had become both nurse and companion. In September 1938, her book *Die Frau und die Tiere* (*The Woman and the Animals*) was published, only weeks before the worst pogrom in German history—Kristallnacht—occurred. The Jewish newspapers which had so recently reviewed her work were closed; all the copies of her book were destroyed.

In 1939, Kolmar and her father were forced to sell their home because of new laws affecting Jewish property. Months in a depressing Berlin tenement were followed by deportation to a labor factory in Berlin-Lichtenberg, and finally to Auschwitz, where she was murdered at age 48.

The poem below, translated by Henry A. Smith in *Dark Soliloquy: The Selected Poems of Gertrud Kolmar* (Seabury Press, 1975), suggests Kolmar's, and the Jews', dark future:



Mulatto Rose

*Mulatto rose. A half-breed. In your veins
Your blood dreams painted idols, chiseled blades,
And strong baboons in dusky jungle glades,
With rose-brown flesh and silver flowing manes.*

*You bend aloft to drink the blazing rain.
Because it was from heat that you were made,
Your green hands do not hide your face in shade,
But hold a basin where the sun has lain.*

*Then, shyly, underneath your wild brown eyes,
Another redness rises in your cheeks.
On evening's edge the flocks break up their play.*

*The last bird utters somber velvet cries.
A blond-haired boy runs past along the creek,
And in the dark his footsteps die away.*

— Y.Z.M.

Cynthia Ozick

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By the time the next semester rolled around, I knew I was ready for a change. I had resigned myself to finishing out the year, but I switched to another section, where the teacher was not herself a German. With her muted tweeds and soft cashmeres, the woman evoked the image of the English gentry, and I took this to be an enormous improvement.

But there was another reason I began to feel better about my German classes, and this had to do with their content as well as their formal presentation. Like it or not, I had actually been learning something all those months, and was now ready, with the rest of the class, to start tackling sentences of a greater complexity than "*Ich bin eine Studentin*."

We had started reading Goethe's *Faust*, and although I wouldn't admit it out loud, I actually found myself falling under its spell. When

Gretchen learns that she has been abandoned by Faust, she sings a lament whose refrain chilled me in its poignancy: "*Meine Ruh ist hin/Mein herz ist schwer/Ich finde sie nimmer/Und nimmermehr*." ["My peace is gone/ My heart is heavy/ I'll find it never/ And nevermore."]

Naturally, I was not the first to discover that this was great poetry—simple, clear and absolutely heartbreaking—but the discovery was nevertheless important to me, and to the way I felt about German as a whole: If poetry I could love was written in this language, then the language itself must contain poetry within it. I might be resistant to finding it, but for the first time, I could see that it was there.

The following fall, my first semester as a graduate student, found me enrolled in yet another German course; this one was designed to help students from a number of departments pass the language examination required by the university for the Master's degree. Here, no one sung praises of German culture. The members of the class wanted to pass the written examination, and they wanted to pass it soon. I spent the next two months furiously translating articles on medieval churches and Romantic painting; when I wasn't doing that, I was creating stacks upon stacks of index cards on which I printed the various nouns, verbs and adjectives I needed to expand my vocabulary. The effort paid off: I passed the exam on the first try. If I wanted, I would never have to read, hear or think another German word in my life.

For about a year, that is exactly what happened. But then one day (one destined day, perhaps), I found myself browsing in a bookshop that specializes in large tables of remaindered books. A muted rose cover on

which was inset the black-and-white photograph of an intense-looking young woman caught my eye. The book turned out to contain, in both German and English, the poetry of Gertrud Kolmar, a German-Jewish poet who had perished, in her prime, at Auschwitz. The volume was priced at fifty-nine cents; even then, that was less than the price of a subway token.

I bought the book and found myself immediately hypnotized. Kolmar's work was like nothing I had ever read; even in translation. I knew I had encountered a rare spirit. The German originals were printed on the facing pages, and so eager was I to devour these remarkable poems, that without a second's hesitation I began reading them. And where I found my German rusty, unequal to the task of deciphering this strange and marvelous work, I went back to the dictionaries and grammar books I swore I would never open again. Nothing less than the true coin of the original would do; the translations seemed pale counterfeits which no longer satisfied. While a stanza like the one that follows is compelling, even in English, it doesn't possess the haunted urgency of the original:

*Auf verdorren schwarzen Kräutern
Liege ich stumm im Höhlenhaus;
Schwer an trankgeschwellten Eutern
Hängen Kind und Fledermaus
Da im Mondforst Auerhähne,
Eine Hexe bellend neckt,
Die mit fahler Widdermähne.*



My cave house is black as ink;
There I lie on dried leaf mats,
And on udders swelled with drink
Heavy hang a child, bat.
Outside in the moonwood howls
A witch that frights the unicorn
On her head a ram's wool cowl
Covers golden curving horns.

(translated by Henry A. Smith)

German's capacity for compound nouns created wildly expressive possibilities: *trankgeschwellten* ("swelled" or "swollen") is literally a swollen, heavy word; *Kringelhörner* ("curving horns") evokes a magical image which "curving horns" can only approximate. And *Auerhähne* ("howl") has an onomatopoetic moan that English doesn't capture. Even the title of the poem, *Troglodytin*, in German tells the reader immediately that the speaker is female, while the neutered English "Troglodyte" is mute on the subject.

I felt that to understand Kolmar, and her powerful, transcendent verse, it was necessary, even imperative, that I understand German as well. I found myself presented

with a moral dilemma of a complexity I could not have imagined two years earlier. Yes, Kolmar wrote in that hated tongue, German; she was, after all, a German citizen her entire life. But she was also a Jew! If I refused to read German out of some atavistic desire to resurrect my family or maintain my integrity, my entire rationale quickly broke down when it came to her work. For if I turned my back on German—the language in which her poetry had budded and blossomed—then I was in effect turning my back on her. And to do that would be to consign her to precisely the kind of oblivion that the Nazis had intended.

In one sense, of course, the Germans succeeded: the woman Gertrud Kolmar has been dead these forty years. But if there is any hope of immortality in our sadly faithless times, then perhaps it is the immortality of art. By reading Kolmar, and reading her in German, perhaps I could succeed in giving her back, if not her life, at least her resonant voice. [See sidebar.]

My exploration of Jewish writers who wrote in German went further; a friend with whom I discussed the subject recommended Paul Celan. Unlike Kolmar, Celan, a Roumanian Jew, survived the Holocaust. His parents, however, did not, and the longing and sorrow engendered by their loss permeates his poetry:

*Runder Stern, du schlingst die goldne Schleife.
Meine Mutter Herz ward wund Blei.*

*Eichne Tür, wer hob dich aus den Angeln?
Meine Sanfte Mutter kann nicht kommen.*



Round star, you wind the golden loop,
My mother's heart was ripped by lead.

Oaken door, who lifted you off your hinges?
My gentle mother cannot return.
(translated by Michael Hamburger)

I noticed, in my dual language edition, that the translation of the last line read: "My gentle mother cannot return." I looked back

at the German original and puzzled over it for a while. *Kommen* didn't mean return, not exactly. The dictionary offered me several possibilities for the word "return," but none of them were *kommen*. I knew what the translator had meant in choosing that word, but it seemed to me the translator might be

wrong. *Kommen* or "come" was far more suggestive, far more ambiguous than "return," for it implied that not only would the poet's mother never literally return, but that her death, brought about in such a hideous way, made even the recalling of her painful and problematic.

"My gentle mother cannot come," he tells us, as if to say, "Even the memory of her refuses to coalesce easily in the imagination." If I hadn't studied German, such subtleties would have been lost on me, but because I did, I was able to reach back across the time and distance, and for a brief and incandescent moment, gain a sense of what Paul Celan might have meant.

It is now more than ten years since I sat in my first German class,

and I have watched myself do a complete about-face as far as my feelings about the language are concerned, and yet the motivation for those feelings has essentially remained the same. At one time, I believed that if I were to have any integrity as a Jew, I would have to hold myself aloof from Germany and things German. I can see now how fundamentally naive such a position was, for it didn't take into account the terrible complexity of history and of culture.

Kolmar and Celan have helped teach me that. Unthinkable as it once seemed to me, I have developed a real love for this dolorous and beautiful language and for the incredible depth of feeling it permits. And like most loves, it is at least in part based on recognition, on that wonderful moment of gazing into the eyes of the beloved, and seeing some apparition of oneself contained within.

Yona Zeldis McDonough is a novelist and short-story writer. She is currently at work on a children's book about biblical heroines.

*I looked at his
open, friendly
face. I burst into
tears. Without
any warning, it
all came spilling
out: how repelled
I was by Germans
and all things
German.*

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THE CULT OF MIRIAM

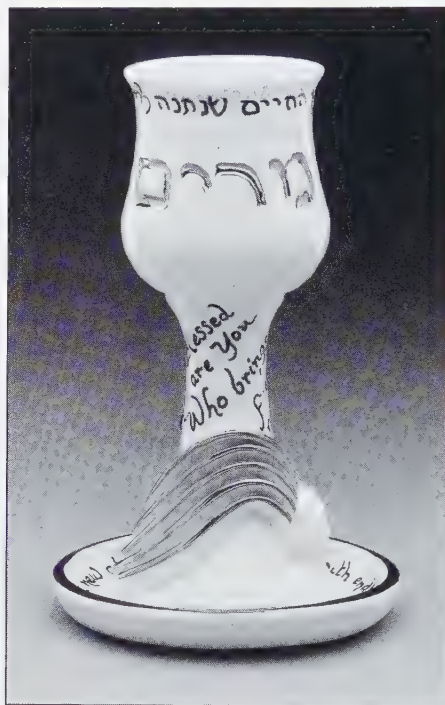
By Susan Schnur

Who was the biblical Miriam? A minor character, backstage sister to the palace-reared Moses, occasional Rosencrantz-&-Guildenstern-type helpmeet? Or was she a real historical leader in her own right—with her own substantial cult-following that was entirely separate from that of her brother's? New biblical scholarship strongly suggests the latter.*

It seems that at some point in biblical history the centrality of Miriam's role in the text was excised, leaving only telltale fragments. For example, there are two versions of the crossing of the Red Sea in the book of Exodus—one having Moses as the protagonist, the other celebrating Miriam. The question is, why does the Bible bother to tell the story twice? "Biblical scholars agree that the [Miriamic] passage is the older, original narrative. Editors of the Torah tried to change the story, focusing attention on Moses," writes lay-researcher Lorrie Greenhouse Gardella, "but the tradition honoring Miriam was strong, and editors dared not eliminate it completely. They retained bits and pieces of Miriam's story."

If you squint while rereading the books of Exodus or Numbers, you'll pick up, through the pentimento, the existence of a cult of devotees who demonstrate extraordinary allegiance to Miriam. Generally the Bible is a text of haiku-like economy, so it's worth wondering why the Bible has taken such careful pains to note both Miriam's death and funeral, as well as documenting that the Hebrew community stays devotedly at her side when she's leprous, and that it discovers when she dies that their only source of water is, indeed, coterminous with her life. "Miriam died and was buried"; records the book of Numbers, "now there was no water for the congregation."

This is potentially strong stuff (without water, a wilderness community is slated for its own death) — was Miriam, in fact, the sole person upon whom the community's sheer biological survival depended? Why should Miriam and water be coterminous—is there the



The potter, Nissan Graham-Mayk, explains: *This graceful pedestal goblet holds spring water for the ritual of Kos Miryam. As the cup rotates, so Miriam's story is unfolded. Symbols of Miriam include the rock from which sprang forth her well, and the precious waters which gently cascade into a musical staff. Notes sparkle up from the water into and through her tambourine. The "Mayim Khayyim" blessing encircles the rim while the blessing for "endless possibilities" tumbles freely down the stem, continuing onto the well of the drip plate. (The blessings are from the ritual of Stephanie Loo Ritari, Matia Angelou and Janet Berkenfield.)*

residue here of excised stories about a Miriam who once nurtured not only a community's body, but its desiccate soul? In general, it's always wonderful to be stopped short in our readings of the Bible, to realize how we dance lightly, again and again, over key narratives, without stopping fully to really grasp them.

Interestingly, Dorothy Zeligs, in a

psychoanalytic study, takes a look at the biblical incident that directly follows Miriam's death and the concurrent disappearance of the Hebrews' gentle, reliable source of water. Moses strikes the rock, and, against God's wishes, begets water violently. Scholar Mhairi MacMillan, citing Zeligs, points out that "Moses' aggressive, sinful act follows directly on the death of Miriam, his older sister, who had been like a mother to him from infancy. Moreover, Miriam had been 'the group mother and source of nurturance' to the wilderness community, and her loss to them was likely to have been followed by deep distress and anger. Zeligs suggests these feelings were unacknowledged and uncontained, and may have led to Moses' aggressive acting-out in anger against the Lord."

Miriam is also of note as the *only* female mentioned in Hebrew scriptural genealogies who is not someone's wife or mother. This exception to the (very depressing) rule can be read in several ways, but one possibility is that Miriam was real, beloved, and formidable—too vital a figure to suffer reduction solely to fictive marriage. On the other hand, as a populist cult figure she threatened biblical editorial policy — she couldn't look *too* large. Maybe appending her to Moses and his family was a kind of compromise.

Archetypally, Miriam derives from the Goddess who is "the infinite depths of the waters, the Great Mother, the Queen of the Sea," writes Mhairi MacMillan. She's the Goddess "whose tears, representing purity, have special powers of healing," and who symbolizes "the profound mystery of the

* (See, for example, Rita J. Burns' *Has the Lord Indeed Spoken Only Through Moses?*, Scholars Press, 1987; Mhairi MacMillan's "Miriam: Wilderness Leader, Priestess, Ancestor of Mary," in Alix Pirani's *The Absent Mother: Restoring the Goddess to Judaism and Christianity*, HarperCollins, 1991; Phyllis Trible's "Bringing Miriam Out of the Shadows," *Bible Review*, 1989; or read *Exodus* and *Numbers* again, but with a refreshed eye.)

Deep; the reservoir and source of life"—those waters which, said Mircea Eliade, "precede every form and sustain every creation."

Clearly the Miriamic story and related ancient Miriamic legends abound with associations to both water and birth: She is a central, religiously ecstatic figure at the crossing of the Red Sea (metaphorically birthing/midwifing a new free nation); she hides her baby brother Moses in a river (and has involvement in his conception); and she's associated with her miraculous well, a magical spring of water that travels with her wherever she goes, and that was famous for its ability to heal, both psychologically and physically. Jewish legend claims that Miriam's well was brought into existence at the most spiritually liminal moment of Creation—during twilight of the sixth day of the world. It was the miracle-worker Miriam (her very name translates in part as "water") who re-founded the magic well after it had been lost for millennia.

Indeed, Jewish legend recounts that the rivers that flowed from Miriam's well were so big that the Hebrews needed boats to cross over from one part of their camp to the other. Many legends tap into Miriamic metaphors; the mystical book of the Zohar, for example, speaks of rivers which come from the Emanation of Understanding called "Marah the Great Sea, the Mother of all living."

The biblical scholar Rita Burns points out that when God punishes Miriam with leprosy, her skin turns "white as snow," a term used in other contexts to designate purity, not ritual uncleanness. Maybe, she posits, beneath the overt narrative of Miriam's punishment there lurks an earlier, suppressed

story of a spiritual initiation rite. When Miriam challenges Moses' unique position as sole spokesperson/prophet of Yahweh, she is perhaps not claiming to be his equal (though she's called a prophetess, the Bible never, oddly, offers evidence of her prophetic activities), but rather she's "asserting that there were other, equally valid ways of conveying the divine message," writes MacMillan. "That is, that Miriam had *her* way, which we may assume to be somehow the women's or feminine way," of calling the sacred into existence.

Finally, if you are, like myself, a contemporary ritual junkie desperately seeking to make religious experience less cognitive, Miriam offers herself also as a beautiful model of ecstatic faith—as dancer/drummer/singer she enjoins us not to neglect in spiritual Judaism the crucial role of disinhibition.

From these musings, let's turn to the Passover seder. Can we take what we know about Miriam and integrate her into the *haggadic* proceedings? Towards the ceremony's conclusion, we open the door for the prophet Elijah, inviting him to drink from his brimming goblet of wine, beseeching him to lead us towards a future of peace and love. Since Elijah's ceremony comes near the end of the seder, how about bracketing it with a goblet for Miriam—a cup of *mayim khayyim* ("living waters") marking the seder's beginning?

This idea (and the ritual that follows) originated with Stephanie Loo Ritari, and was

written by Ritari, Matia Angelou and Janet Berkenfield. Ritari suggests filling a crystal goblet with fresh spring water. (But see Nissan Graham-Mayk's porcelain version, commissioned by LILITH and available for purchase, opposite page.)

To Ritari, Miriam's cup represents "consciousness of what's absent from Judaism . . . a better valuing of heart and body, intuition, creativity, spontaneity, direct personal spiritual experience, egalitarianism, inclusivity, mercy and consolation." If you're interested in appropriating this ritual for your own use (and if Ritari's associations feel too complicated for you), search for your own metaphors and meaning. I myself, in finding Thesean threads, tend to trust most whatever is simplest and from the heart.

Perhaps, holding Miriam's cup aloft, you feel that it stands for healing in its broadest sense. Maybe it symbolizes for you the need to infuse women's perceptions into Judaism and into our own private valued lives. Maybe Miriam's cup stands for process—the trek *through* the wilderness, as opposed to phallic goal (the arrival at Canaan). Or, it might represent women's special abilities to celebrate struggle, change or growth. What's most absent at your seder, demanding to be present? My personal angle on *Kos Miryam* [Miriam's Cup] this year has to do with magic—the magic of touch: that one can sometimes touch and heal, be touched and heal.

Since we at LILITH are committed to the task of forwarding women's felt needs in Jewish life, we were pleased when we had the brilliant idea of commissioning someone to create an actual ritual object called "Miriam's Cup." We think that clay-artist Nissan Graham-Mayk has fulfilled the task beautifully.

Jung once said that ancient archetypes are like "riverbeds which dry up when the water deserts them," but which can be refilled again at any time. "The longer water has flowed in this channel," he wrote, "the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return to its own bed." Miriam's cup, once glistening with water that energized the soul, calls to us in confident invitation. Let all who are ready, come and fill it. Let all who are thirsty, come and drink.

May next year find us still upon our journeys.

To order the goblet shown on page 16, contact: The Microfarm Pottery, 67 Reynolds Drive, Eatontown, NJ 07724. 908-542-4949. Chen porcelain wheel-thrown goblet comes with drip tray; lead-free glossy white glaze. Hand-carved bas relief designs are black and 23k gold; lettering is freehand calligraphy, black and 23k gold. Goblet stands 7 to 8 inches; holds 5 ounces. Goblet and tray are signed and dated. Copyright 1991 by Nissan Graham-Mayk. Price is \$95 plus 10% shipping.

MIRIAM'S CUP: A New Ritual for Women at Passover

BY STEPHANIE LOO RITARI, MATIA ANGELOU, AND JANET BERKENFIELD

After explaining the symbolism of *Kos Miryam* (Miriam's Cup), raise the goblet and recite:

LEADER: *Zot Kos Miryam, Kos Mayim Khayyim, Zay-kher l'tzee-at Mitzra-im.* This is the Cup of Miriam, the Cup of living waters, which we drink to remember the Exodus from Egypt.

ALL: These are the living waters, God's gift to Miriam, which gave new life to Israel as we struggled with ourselves in the wilderness.

N'Varekh et Eyn ha-Khayyim sheh-*

natnah lanu mayim khayyim.

Barukh Atta Adonai, Eloheinu Hei ha-Olamim, sheh-ha-kol nih'yeh bi-d'varo.

Blessed are You God, Life-Source of the Universe, by Whose word everything is created.

Blessed are You God, Who brings us from the narrows into the wilderness, sustains us with endless possibilities, and enables us to reach a new place.

AMEN.

(All drink.)

For more information on *Kos Miryam* ceremonies (copyright 1990, Kol Isha) for occasions other than Passover, write: Kol Isha, Box 142, Arlington, MA 02174.

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Beauty is The Mother of Death



Writings from Our Deathbeds to Those We Love

An “ethical will” is a statement of values and/or a spiritual accounting of your life written just before you die. In it, you might construct a teleological narrative of your life — a thumbnail sketch of what your life really stands for after all, what matters to you most.

An ethical will is addressed to someone left behind —usually the writer’s children, maybe a spouse or relative or friend, sometimes just the anonymous, caring world. It is a torch passed on. Ethical wills are an exquisite, forgotten Jewish tradition, a crucial counterpart to the conventional will dealing only with material accounts.

The following wills are excerpted from *So That Your Values Live On*, edited by Jack Riemer and Nathaniel Stampfer (Jewish Lights Publishing, 1991), a book that reproduces dozens of wills (many belonging to women) throughout Jewish history.

— Susan Schnur

Jennie Stein Berman

Jennie Berman, who immigrated to America, is concerned here for Sam, her bachelor brother. The date of this letter is 1956.

To all my children:

This is your mother's last wish. After I am gone, you should always be together and well and happy; and of what is left in money I want you to *share and share alike*. Florence, Alvin, Julius, Lester, if it is only one dollar you should each get a fourth of it. That is my last wish. And if I go before Sam, you should see to it that he has a place to sleep with something to eat at all times. Please. Then I can rest in peace. That is my last wish, that you all be well and happy. And I give you all my Blessing and Love
Mother
This is my last wish.

Shulamit Rabinovitch

The following ethical will was written during the Holocaust in the Kovno ghetto. It is addressed to two sons living in America:

My dear, fortunate sons!

We sense the end is near. It will not be long before they finish us off. On one hand it is good, on the other hand very bad, to die now. Good that we have lived to see the end come, and bad to die now, a moment before the redemption.

Actually it is not difficult for me to die, or for Papa either. What is very hard, infinitely hard, is the fact that your young brother Shmuel will die when we do. And he is such a wonderful boy. Even under the brutal conditions he developed into a fine human being; perhaps with less formal education, but with so much humane feeling and refinement, that it would be truly worthwhile for him to remain alive. How few of those who suffered this treatment retained the human image! The struggle for existence is hard and everyone wants to live, to save himself; the law of the jungle is dominant: "Save yourself if you can."

But you may be very proud of your father. He is among those who never took advantage of his public office, never put Shmuel or me ahead of the other sufferers of whom he was responsible. How we wish you could have some knowledge about these past three painful years. I hope that some will survive and that you will receive some word about our sufferings and our dying. It

is now in its fourth year and the end is approaching. It didn't really pay for us to hold out and suffer so long and then not survive. Were they the righteous ones (if there is such a thing), those who were first to go? For years we learned so much, suffered so much. We could teach others so very much, and it is too bad that it all comes to nothing, along with us. Were we to be rescued, we could dry up the oceans, and demonstrate with how little a person can get along! If I could only bequeath you the ability to get along with little and the ability

*The saddest
part about
leaving you,
my three
children, is
not knowing
how you will
grow up.*

to do everything for yourself, then you, being free, could never be unhappy.

I have already written you several letters with various dates and have left them for you at a number of locations. I doubt, however, whether you will receive them.

Our greatest consolation and good fortune is that you are not here. But dear children, don't take foolish things to heart. Be happy, contented people; be good human beings and loyal sons of your oppressed nation. Never abandon your land or your people. Fight for freedom and social justice. Be just and honest; and under normal conditions this is so easy! We speak of you often, and you are our consolation. Whenever Muka gets very depressed, he says: "Mama, how I'd like to see Amos and Nioma again."

There is still a remnant left here of

your friends, boys as well as girls. They mention you often with affection and with ungrudging envy. Know how to appreciate your good fortune and use it not for yourselves alone but for others both near and distant. Lighten the life of your grandfather, grandmother, aunts and uncles who have also survived. And don't mourn for us with tears and words, but rather with deeds. We were not useless here; in any way we could, we tried to make things easier for those around us. I am leaving the world with almost a clear conscience. I lived my life. I have no complaints to anyone. It is a matter of fate; I believe in *besheit*, that things are destined. But why Muka? That is our greatest sorrow. I regret that I cannot communicate to you everything we have experienced. You will probably know something; but whatever you will ever hear and know, the reality is a thousand times more horrible and more painful. Words don't exist to tell it; no colors exist with which to represent it.

I hope you are under the influence of your grandfather, grandmother and Aunt Jennie. Obey them and be good people. Too young you have become orphans. But better to be orphans there than to be with father and mother here. I kiss you very warmly. Kiss and greet all those near to me, whoever may be there. After all, I know nothing about anyone, just as no one knows about us. We have been buried alive here for three years now.

Your mother

Harold

I address myself to my children — to all of our household. My father died at the age of 83 and I have a premonition that in this, my 83rd year, I too will be called to my final resting place . . .

My deep concern is for your mother. What will become of her if I should be the first? She is so dependent on me. I pray to God and ask Him to prolong her sister's life so that they may spend the rest of their lives together. By that I mean that Fanny should move in with Mom.

. . . All my life I have tried to help others without expecting anything in return — and now I make a simple request — call Mom if possible every day — visit her once and week — dine with her once a week — call her and tell her what you want for dinner — make her laugh, have children call, and visit once in a while. While she is away, write to her frequently. Do it not as an obligation but because I know you really love her and want to make her happy.

Forgive me if I hurt you by suggesting this — I mean well — I am very proud of you and love you dearly. I am grateful for the many blessings He has showered upon us one and all. In fact I feel that we have received more than our share of *naches* (parental pleasure).

And now I must make a confession. For the past few months I have gradually developed a hate for money and what it does to people. I honestly feel that if one reaches the stage where he has provided fully for his family and himself, the balance does not belong to him. It is a loan-lease from the Almighty to distribute to charity. If I survive I will try to spend the rest of my life seeking out avenues of worthwhile charities preferably in Israel.

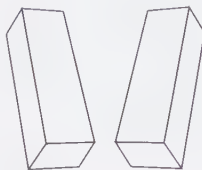
Mother and I lived modestly. I never succeeded in convincing her to buy a mink coat. She always felt that was showing off. I lived the same way. If we lived luxuriously we could have never helped the families for most of our married life.

You have now reached the stage where you can broaden your philanthropy and in larger amounts. I hope and pray that you and your children will follow the same pattern. The children should have begun long ago. Teach them to put aside from their allowance and from any money

they earn for charity. Do it now.

Above all — be forever vigilant for those in need and don't wait until they ask you — that is humiliating.

One last request — when the time comes for my last journey, I would like Mother's and my casket facing each other — she on my right side — all it needs is to place the caskets at an angle, like this:



Fare Well.

Nitzah Marsha Jospe

Dying of cancer at age 32, she wrote this ethical will to her three small children:

Sunday, Rosh Hodesh Adar 5740, February 17, 1980

I'm afraid Tamar won't remember me. I'm not even sure what Ilan at 4 1/2 will remember — not much I'm sure; and Deena at 7 1/2 may remember some harsh things because for her it has been pretty negative lately, and I'll try to make things better when I go back home from the hospital, but I find I'm very tired . . . I feel sometimes I could go on forever, and at other times that I wish the end would come . . .

I can't really tell you what I want for you, because even now I don't know what I want for myself. What is important is to make each day good and not to say "tomorrow" or "in the future it will be better." Happiness is a goal, but not something we must have every moment. That is not life.

I want you to be good Jews. It's something I've always been proud of . . . I would like to be able to help you and enjoy you, just as my parents did with me. Since that is not possible, I want you to know how much I love you. I wish you had more memories of me to help you know me.

Sometimes the memories are better than the reality.

The saddest party is leaving you and not knowing how you will develop. I would like to think you will be good, honest people, who have enough self-esteem and self-worth to stand up for yourselves, and not be afraid to say what you think.

Don't think anyone else is better than you are. You are as good as anyone. Each person is special, and so is each of you; not

*"And if I go
before Sam,
you should see
to it that he
has a place to
sleep with
something to
eat at all
times . . ."*

just to me, but to yourselves.

You, of course, want your own things from your own life, but parents can't help having dreams for their children.

You mustn't be bound by what I would like for you. I expect you to go your own way as good people, the best way you know how.

Holocaust Wills

Part of a will written by a woman of Kovel, to her husband; carved on the synagogue wall:

Reuben Atlas, this is to inform you that here, in this place, your wife Gina and your son Imosz were murdered. Our child cried bitterly; he did not want to die. Go forth to battle and avenge the blood of your wife and your only son. We die for no crime whatever.

The unsigned will of a young woman written on the same synagogue wall:

I am a daughter of Israel, twenty years old. O how lovely is the world about us! Why should they destroy us when everything within me desires and yearns for life. Have my last minutes really arrived? Vengeance! Come and avenge me, whoever reads this last request of mine.

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Turning 40: A RITUAL, TALMUDICALLY

BY RIVKAH WALTON

It was a week before my 39th Birthday and every hour the fear—no, panic—was growing. Being forty couldn't be nearly as terrifying as getting there. Getting to forty means you're undeniably middle-aged, grown-up—and I was to have only a year to get my life together!

Overcoming my fear of being the center of this kind of attention, I called together my community to help me through this vulnerable moment.

"Please come to my 'last-chance, exorcise-the-demons 39th birthday party,'" I implored. They laughed knowing laughs. "Please, no presents; I have no intention of writing thank-you notes," I added, letting my last-minute invitees off the hook.

When the thirty-five friends who could find a week-night babysitter or release themselves from writing papers had assembled, we repaired to the low-lighted living room, sitting in the inevitable circle.

Herb Levine doubled as high priest and levitical singer for the evening, drawing the group together with the niggun for *Orech yamim asbi-eyha*. (We changed it to the feminine for the evening.)

The group having centered, I began the ceremony by speaking about liminal times and places—about how dangerous thresholds seem, being passage points in which one is suspended between two statuses, but is not fully of either one. "You are neither in nor out, neither here nor there, neither being nor non-being, neither child nor adult—and those in-between times and places in the journey seem particularly fraught with danger." (In some cultures, people put amulets on their doorposts to ward off demons.)

"Tonight, Herb and I have pieced together a ceremony to help me end the 4th decade of my life with a measure of strength and grace. Together you and I will name and banish the demons that make maturing so hard and frightening for most of us, and will try to access our collective wisdom to launch the spiritual process of the coming year.

"I want to thank each of you in advance for coming and for helping with this process."

I then invited the assembled to help me banish the demons lying in wait at the door of one's fortieth year. "I will name a demon, and I ask you to join me in calling out, 'Away, away, away, away, away...!' after each one. Please feel free to call out the names of your own demons around maturity issues." And so we started.

"There is a demon who says, 'No matter what you do, it won't be good enough.'"

"Away, away, away, away, away..."

"There is a demon who says, 'If you are a helpless child,

people will take care of you.'"

"Away, away, away...!"

"There is a demon who says, 'If you keep playing, bedtime will never come.'"

"Away, away, away...!"

When I reached the end of my short list, there was a silence, and I thought I had over-reached the intimacy limits of the community. But then someone broke the silence, "There is a demon who says, 'I will never be loved.'"

You could hear an audible collective intake of breath and then, "Away, away away...!"

And so it continued, one after another, until someone identified the grand demon of them all, "There is a demon who says, 'You have to get your life together by the time you're 40.'"

"Away, away, away...!"

We began to hum and sing the song based on the words of Reb Nachman of Bratslav, *Kol ha-olam kulo gesher tsar me-od, ve-ha-ikar lo yifachad klal*.

Herb then spoke to the tradition that one way to fool demons who have targeted you is to take a new name, and he invited the circle to give me new spiritual names for the work of the coming year. One after one they were offered. Devorah, Yonah, Shleimut, Lilith, Miriam, Tiger or for other

moments, Tigger, and more. Each spoke of a different side of me that is or needs to be.

And again, *Orech yamim asbi-eyha*...

Finally, Herb asked me to stand in the middle of the circle and he and Ayala Guy, a frequent Havurah Institute teacher and one of the most spiritually sensitive women I know, stood in front and back of me. Alternating, they read to me the 91st Psalm, and they were truly conduits for great goodness. I felt truly blessed through them and by them. With the final *orech yamim asbi-eyha*, Ayala and I slowly began to dance. And then we spontaneously reached out to the others seated around the room, pulling them into the center of the circle one by one until all in the room were singing, dancing, swaying, *Orech yamim asbi-eyha*...

After such an experience, blowing out the candles on the sacher torte seemed (dare I say it?) a bit saccharine, but lest I tempt some other demon, I complied with the demands of tradition.

Rivkah Walton, coordinator of the National Havurah Committee, is assistant director of the Pennsylvania Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights. She is also a metalsmith who specializes in Jewish ceremonial art. A version of this piece appeared in the National Havurah Committee newsletter.

Song translated: *All the world is a narrow bridge and the important thing is not to be afraid at all.*

In rabbinic tradition, this Psalm was used as an anti-demonic incantation.

We have been told that Jerry Garcia has included portions of it in his recent song, *My Sisters and Brothers*. —HL

Psalm 91 translation adapted from *PS Tanakh* (1988) to render pronouns gender-neutral.

Terror, Plague and Scourge mentioned in Psalm 91 are names of ancient Mid-Eastern demons of destruction. — HL

Almost an entire state of the Talmud struggles with problems of women who are between statuses.

STREET of WHORES

I'm going to go
everywhere and do
everything and
die exhausted but
satisfied that I've
never said no to an
experience, never
refused a challenge.

By Ruth Knafo Setton



Photograph: David Seidner, in Theatre de la Mode, Riccoli Books 1991

I was a child again, feeling insulated from the world outside by the wall of laughter, by the globe in the window, by the music in the kitchen, by the smells and sounds of Morocco. I was 14, returning home from the library, books piled high against my chest, going to my room and opening *The Royal Road to Romance*, poring over the photo of Richard Halliburton, the traveller, turbanned and bronzed, arms akimbo, laughing with white teeth, the Taj Mahal behind him. That's me, I'd thought, that's going to be me. I'm going to go everywhere and do everything and die exhausted but satisfied that I've never said no to an experience, never refused a challenge.

Hours later, my eyes burning from reading under the weak yellow bulb, I'd come down and see my father sitting at the living-room window, looking out. He'd never even notice me if I didn't speak. I'd go over to him and hug him and he'd smile faintly but keep staring outside. "What is it, Daddy?" I'd ask. "What are you doing?"

He'd turn and look at me with an odd light in his green-brown eyes, almost coldly, as if I were a stranger. I always expected him to say next: Who are you? What are you to me? Why are you touching me?

I felt no claim on my father. Ever. I'd retreat invisibly, shrinking in myself, but too proud to

move back. I'd stand my ground, refusing to budge until the man returned from wherever he'd fled, until he acknowledged me as blood of his blood.

Finally, after an eternity of waiting, he'd return and soften slightly and say, "Bring the globe."

Together we'd sit near the window, moonlight shining in, illuminating his expressionless face, and he'd say, "You first."

I'd shut my eyes hard and spin the globe and let my finger choose a place to stop. And wait for judgment.

"Wisconsin?" he'd say, disappointed. "Ah, *ma fille*, so little sense of adventure. What are they known for, their cheese?"

"I'll try again! Let me try again. I wasn't ready."

He'd pretend to consider, then hold the globe out to me once more. "This time don't be afraid," he'd tell me. "The world is yours. You have only to choose."

I'd take a deep breath—thinking, did you choose, Daddy?—and I'd spin it violently, with everything inside me, a matter of life and death—and my finger would shoot out, independent of me. And wait.

"Japan. A good choice, *ma fille*. There we could have many adventures. A country unlike ours, a place where we could disguise ourselves and wander forever. We would have to learn their rituals, you'd paint your face white and serve me tea, I would let my hair grow perhaps and pin it up—so—with bamboo sticks pointing through it. We would live by the sea and eat seaweed and swim. The water is different there, even a different color. And it's so buoyant, you can't sink no matter how hard you throw yourself into the waves. It crashes you back against the cliffs. A fine choice." He'd smile at me.

And I'd wilt in relief. "Now your turn, Daddy."

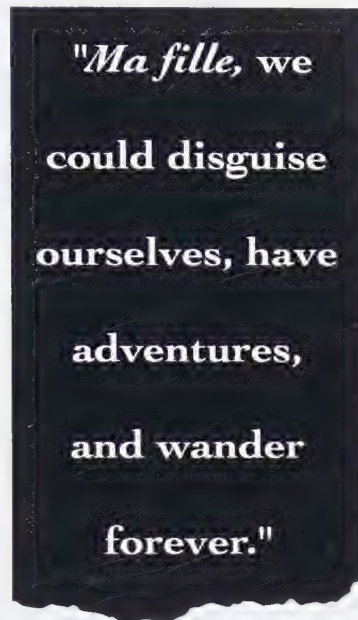
"I am sleepy now. Next time."

"Then will you tell me again how you skated on the mountain lake of Ifrane with the Sultan? How when he fell, his two bodyguards had to fall, too?" Trying to hold him near me. Him already elusive, slipping away. The invisible barricade erected around him.

"Not now. *Bonne nuit, chérie*." He'd kiss me lightly and go up to his room where my mother waited for him, also restless in her sleep.

I'd follow quickly, afraid to stay alone downstairs in the dark. Seeing men with rolls of black hair pinned up with long sticks and women with white faces screaming in a sea of roaring waves. He should have been buried with a globe, I thought after the funeral. Because until the end, he was seeking, seeking, and I didn't think he'd ever found it. Every land was a promise to him. But what was the promise? Death. The ultimate promise, the one that never lies. The dark wind blowing from the future, Camus had called it.

And now I watched my father being buried on a windy day in Jerusalem. My mother and my brother Ben and me. The mourners. For Joseph Lek, a wandering Jew, a businessman whom no one had ever known. Daddy's legs blown off, his face exploded, his body shattered, the Israelis used to dealing with bodies that are in pieces, gluing them back together as if they were a jigsaw puzzle, Daddy lovingly, professionally, reconstructed. A puzzle in little



pieces, to be put together again. A hopeless, terrible puzzle in which the pieces never fit and for which I can't cry.

At the hotel we sat in our room. The fan whirring until Ben, with a curse, rose on a chair and turned it off. But he couldn't figure out how to keep the light on without the fan, so we sat on the chairs and the bed in the dark. Mom crying helplessly, ceaselessly. Startled, I saw how gray her hair was, the reddish henna only towards the ends. She looked dumpy, a round little old woman. "Everyone is gone now," she said. "My parents, my husband. I'm alone."

"You have us," I said, from the corner near the window, where I sat huddled in a chair.

She didn't seem to hear me. "I'd always hoped we'd get back together somehow," she said. "I kept waiting for him to call or write from Israel and tell me, Sheba, I made a mistake. Can I come home?"

Ben sighed from the edge of the bed. "Don't, Mom," he said. "Please don't."

"He never called," she said, surprised. "I waited and waited and he never called or wrote. I gave him my life. He was the only man I'd ever known. And he left me alone. I loved him. I thought he loved me."

"He did love you," Ben said. "Sometimes it just isn't enough."

"No," she said. "I wasn't enough. Your father always wanted the green grass. Nothing was ever enough. 'It's gray here,' he told me once." Her voice broke. "'It's gray and you're gray and I'm gray when I'm with you.'"

"Mom." I went over to her, kneeled by her chair, put my head on her lap. But what could I say? Suddenly, there was absolutely nothing to say. It was all lies. For five years she'd stayed in the cocoon of her apartment in Horsens, Pennsylvania, and cooked twenty-course Moroccan feasts for Ben and me. It was pathetic for all of us, not just her. I looked up at her face and saw the twitch, deeper and more pronounced than ever, moving with a life of its own. Giving a jarring, odd look to her face. A mechanical doll. Her name is Bathsheba. And she twitches. The gray-red hair, straggly now and uncombed. Her brown eyes, always expressive, always volatile. But her face spotted, strange, white dots and brown dots, as if she were moldy, left unused for too long. Her father had sold her in marriage to the first bidder. She had given everything she had to her husband and her children. Now she had nothing. Even the dream of my father returning was gone—and she didn't know what to do.

Israel. The land of milk and honey. I hadn't allowed myself to look around yet, to see my surroundings, but now I was here. Tel Aviv was new, white, unlike Jerusalem where I seemed to hear screams under every cobblestone, feel hands grasping, clawing at me, from every crevice. Early this morning Mom, Ben and I had prayed at the Western Wall—in rain and wind—and had added our prayers written on scraps of paper to the notes stuffed in every opening. "May we all be free," I'd written, and backed off quickly, looking at the Orthodox men in black, separated from the women by a partition. Swaying and moaning, their voices rising above the wind, they frightened me. There was something ancient, disturbing, terribly sad and futile about being a Jew standing and praying before a wall of gray rocks. I wanted to feel inspired; instead I felt crushed by thousands of years of persecution and bloodshed.

"There's so much I still have to tell you," my mother had said afterwards at the airport, clutching my hand in hers. "Are you sure you want to stay in Israel all by yourself? What if I never see you again?"

"You will, Mom, you will," and suddenly, unbidden, the tears fell from my eyes. I cried for my mother, for my father, for Benny, for the Jews, for Israel, for the Arabs, for me. I stood and wept, Benny and my mother holding me, and I thought, it's true what my mother said: even if I see them again, it will never be the same, nothing I do or say will ever be the same.

Two weeks since my father's funeral. I'd received a letter from my boss at Bowden Press. He'd been furious at me, but was giving

me a month to reconsider my resignation, during which time my assistant editor would take care of my *Breathless* erotic line.

No, I thought, I'm never going back.

An old couple, the man in a clerical collar, stumbled on the rocks past me as I sat on the beach. "I can't believe it," the man said to the woman. "I still can't believe it. Prostitutes in the Holy Land. What is this world coming to?"

I looked at them in disbelief, and for the first time in days, roused myself from my stupor and walked the few steps to them. I knew I looked wild, my hair uncombed. I hadn't washed or changed out of my black sweatshirt in days. "This is a real land," I told the man, my voice rusty. I cleared my throat.

The old woman put a hand to her heart as if to ward me off. I saw the pink powder cracking on her cheeks. "Bert," she said feebly.

"Now see here," Bert said.

"Now see here," I said. "This is a country like any other country. What did you expect? That people don't live and eat and die here? It's not still in the Bible. So what if there are prostitutes here? You've got them back in Iowa, or wherever you're from. And there are thieves here and gamblers and liars, too, goddamn it. Israel doesn't just exist in your dreams." I stared at their amazed faces for a second, then walked away, my heart pounding. What had I done that for? What's it to me if Reverend Bert sees a whore? What do I care? I laughed suddenly and started running. Bitch, I told myself. You're still alive.

The next day I bought the *Jerusalem Post* and sat at a sidewalk cafe on Dizengoff and read the news for the first time in weeks. It felt like years. April 12, 1975. Everything seemed new, yet unchanged. The same problems, the same shit — now Lebanon, now Syria, now Iran, now the West Bank—but here on Dizengoff — where, the manager of my building had told me, if you sit at a cafe long enough, you'll see everyone in Israel—the sun was shining and women flirted, soldiers stared, children laughed on their way home from school, tourists snapped photos. I had washed and put on a green sweater and jeans. Drinking black coffee as thick as mud, I told myself, okay, you're back, Lek. Maybe not in top form, but you're back. Now. . . to find a job, make *aliyah*. To learn Hebrew at an *ulpan*. To meet people, maybe make friends . . . I felt excited, ready to begin life.

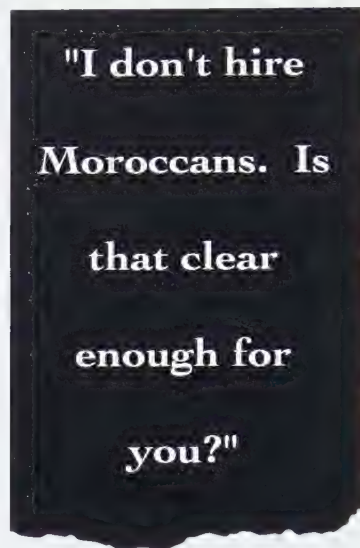
There were no jobs in the *Post*, so I checked the bulletin board at the American consulate: English teachers needed, no experience necessary. *Makhon leSafot Tzion*, Zion Language Institute.

I walked lightly down the street, past the cafes and exclusive boutiques, towards the more residential area. Here it was: Zion Language Institute. I went inside, climbed a

flight of dark stairs and entered a large airy room, filled with people at students' desks, scribbling. A thin, freckled young woman gave me an application form. "English teacher?" she asked me.

"Yes."

"Fill it out and bring it back to me. Then wait your turn. You'll meet with the director and he'll let you know if you're in." The application form was ridiculously simple.



Name, address, birthdate, place. Education and experience. I wondered if it would be to my advantage to mention that I had been a senior editor of female romances for the past five years. I decided it couldn't hurt.

"How long will it be?" I asked the freckled woman.

"At least two hours," she said. "Go and eat. Take your time."

I went outside and bought a falafel, then explored the area. The houses here were lovely, shady and secluded, with courtyards and inner gardens. Maybe if I found a roommate, I could afford to rent a room here. But I vetoed that instantly. I didn't want anybody — woman or man — peering into my existence, witnessing my unsteady return to life. Staring at a lush pink flower, I tore it from the branch. Almost intoxicatingly sweet, it dizzied me, reminded me of Central Park in the spring.

Back upstairs, a handful of us remained. We sat on the narrow balcony outside the classroom and talked about Israel. They were all American and all younger than I. Jim had come to play on a basketball team, but had found himself in need of money so his coach had advised him to try for a job here.

"Do you know anything about teaching English?" I asked him.

"Nah." He grinned. "I'm nineteen. I just got out of high school."

Meggie was twenty two, a college student who'd dropped out and was drifting through the world, taking odd jobs everywhere she went.

"Do you feel free?" I asked her.

She looked at me incomprehensibly. "I guess."

Tom and Gina had met on a kibbutz in the south and had decided to try life in the city. They were old-timers, already in Israel for a year. "It's intense," Tom said. "I mean the mood here is really intense. You feel like you're on the edge of an explosion any second."

I shuddered, turned away. A man, buried in pieces.

"Besides," Gina added, "now that they've got a McDavid's here — you know like McDonald's — there's no reason to go back, right?"

It was after four when Jim was finally called in. He came out ten minutes later, slinging his backpack. "No problem," he said, "as long as you can talk English." Tom and Gina went in next. They came out, grinning with relief. "This'll keep us going till we decide what to do," they told Meggie and me. "Good luck!"

I was next. I went down a narrow hallway to an office where a bald, stocky man sat, impatiently ruffling papers. He glanced at me for a moment, then indicated a chair. He studied my application. "Oh, you're Anne Lek."

"Yes?" I didn't understand his tone. An air of subtle disapproval.

"You're thirty six."

"Yes." Was it my age? I knew I was older than the others, but —

"I see you received your master's degree in English from Columbia University in New York. A good school."

"Yes," I said again.

"Anne Lek." He studied me uncomfortably. "I'm sorry. We have no openings. Thank you for coming."

"Wait a minute." I felt a slow rumbling deep inside me, almost like a train roaring through my body. "I was under the impression that you had quite a few openings —"

"Miss Lek," he said, emphasizing the 'miss.' "Your qualifications are not what we're seeking. Good-bye."

I sat stubbornly. "My qualifications are not sufficient? But a high-school graduate's are? What exactly are you looking for here? What is this all about?"

He sighed, toyed with his pencil. "Miss Lek, shall I be honest?"

"Please."

"I see here that you were born in Morocco."

"Yes?" I was in a tunnel. I still couldn't see the light. "So?"

"So I know Moroccans."

I stared at him blankly.

"Don't get the wrong idea. Some of my best friends are Moroccans. You're warm people. Fun-loving people. Religious. But not reliable. Not good workers."

"Not good workers?" I echoed his words. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"Miss Lek." He stood up. "I'm going to have to ask you to leave."

"Just a minute, Mr. — Mr. —"

"Mr. Levy."

"Mr. Levy. I left Morocco when I was four years old. I was raised in America. But what does that matter anyway? I deal with the English language as an editor every day. I'm afraid I still don't understand."

"Then let me spell it out for you, Miss Lek." He leaned over his desk, a twisted smile on his face. "I don't hire Moroccans. Is that clear enough for you? Now, *shalom*. I have work to do. And please, send in the last girl."

I was so angry I wanted to take his smiling red face and smash it against the wall like a fruit. And scream at him: that's your Moroccan, here's your Moroccan for you. You son of a bitch. But I was civilized, so I walked out silently, gesturing to Meggie to go in, seeing her out of the corners of my eyes staring at me, but incapable of stopping to say a word. I went down the stairs and walked nonstop to the beach, my familiar stretch with the rocks and the dunes, and I stood at the very edge, the waves rushing in and trickling over my shoes, and I bent over and dipped my hands in the cold, salty water, splashing it on my face, over and over, until I was dripping and shivering. But I still didn't feel clean.

My days, ever since the Moroccan incident (the way I termed it in my mind), consisted of a long stroll along the beach during which I felt open, raw, as if I were drawing strength from the water, and the walk up the winding Street of the Whores. I fell in love with the name first. In Hebrew or English, it rolled on the tongue. And the women fascinated me. These were not the prime whores—those were gathered off of Allenby, also near the beach, but closer to downtown, near the port area and cafes and shady characters. I walked there sometimes, too; it reminded me of New York. The whores who sat on the rocks of this abandoned, twisting road were fewer, older, even wizened, a few leathery-skinned from the sun. But they were not sad or beaten. As they got used to me, carrying a sketchbook I'd bought on Allenby to pretend I was an artist, they'd cackle and wave at me. I wondered how Reverend Bert would react if he saw them. Women the same age as his wife pursuing man's oldest profession.

I knew I should be looking for another job. My one-month lease on the apartment would run out in a week. I couldn't live on my savings forever. I knew Mr. Levy was probably an aberration. The Civil Liberties Union in America could have had a field day with him. I knew — I knew — I knew — there was so much I should do. Life decisions, major, major, looming over me. I should look seriously for a job, for friends. There were many support

groups for American immigrants, even special ones for single women. My experience of Israel was so hazy, so dreamlike. Something was preventing me from sinking roots here, as if I were afraid of my life becoming real.

I love Israel, but it's not a promised land. I said the words to myself, stopping on the side of the road, near the oldest whore, the one who fascinated me most. My sentiments to Reverend Bert boomeranging and coming back to hit me between the eyes. Of course, there are whores here, and prejudice, too. What a strain to put on a land, to call it promised. There are no promised lands, no promised endings. Oh God, Lek, I thought, pretending to stare at the rocks behind the old woman, are you finally going to open your eyes and face the void?

The woman stared back at me from under her coquettishly tilted, large straw hat, her face in shade, mysterious. She never smiled like the others. She waited, straddling her rock as if she were on a horse, her bare legs falling over the sides, the coarse grass and sand of the small hill between her red toenails. Her stomach was flat under a white and red embroidered peasant blouse, her skirt flounced up around her thighs. A man in a black car, driving down towards the beach, stopped in front of her. I slowed down, too, across the street, slowly moving sideways, like a crab, back towards the car to see her remove her hat. Her face, exposed at last, naked to the daylight and the man and me. She was talking and laughing. She didn't move

from her rock, but made him lean out his window to talk to her. Closer, closer I came, so slyly, so silently, like a spy, like a cat on soundless feet when she noticed me, so close I could touch the black car.

She took off her hat and spit. Staring at her face, I was suddenly afraid — not of the network of lines crisscrossing her brown face, but of the startling hunger in her eyes. It doesn't die, does it, grandmother? It stays and grows until it eats you alive. A low spark, nearly forgotten, bursts into life.

I forced myself to walk past her and the man watching me from his car, to push on, past the hunger in her face that I knew mirrored my own. Hunger — not for a man, nor even for money — but for oneself. Hunger that will never die, not until it's fed.

I stopped at the top of the hill and looked back down — at the women like spiders, legs and toes spread out and crawling over their rocks, at the sea sparkling and foaming — and I saw that it was desire that had led my father here to Israel, and desire — for myself — that would lead me away now, far from the Street of the Whores and back to the world, not as I knew it, but as I would re-learn it, perhaps re-create it.

Ruth Knafo Setton is working on a novel about a Moroccan-Jewish woman. She's received fellowships from three writer's colonies, and has published widely.

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SEE

Independent Filmmakers: Looking at Ourselves is a guide to films featured in the San Francisco Bay Area's acclaimed annual Jewish film festival. Edited by Deborah Kaufman, Janis Plotkin, and Rena Orenstein, this resource describes more than 225



Amy Irving (left) and Suzzy Roche in "Crossing Delancey"

films — features, documentaries, shorts, Yiddish, Hebrew, etc. — with information on how to order them, plus a step-by-step guide to organizing your own film festival. \$20 to institutions; \$10 to individuals. *The Jewish Film Festival*, 2600 Tenth Street, #102, Berkeley, CA 94710.

CONNECT

Heal and renew yourself in broadening circles of social, political and ecological transformation at a retreat center offering workshops by Starhawk, Judith Plaskow, Rabbi Burt Jacobson, Matthew Fox, Arthur Waskow, Linda Hirschhorn and others. Contact: *Jeff Roth, Elat Chayyim, The Woodstock Center for Healing and Renewal*, P.O. Box 127, Woodstock, NY 12498.

The Second International Conference of Children of Holocaust Survivors will take place in Jerusalem, July 5-10, 1992. Topics include the conspiracy of silence; the importance of the family unit after the Holocaust; legislation relating to anti-Semitism, racism and the denial of the Holocaust;

and education for the third generation. *2nd Generation Conference, Peltours, Te'um Organizers*, P.O.B. 8388, 91082 Jerusalem, Israel.

Join Jewish genealogists

at the 11th summer seminar on Jewish Genealogy, July 26-31. "The New York Jewish Experience" will be explored from the first Sephardic settlers in 1654 to the newest wave of Eastern European emigres today. Attendees do hands-on research at such repositories as the New York Public Library, local court houses, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. *Jewish Genealogical Society, Inc.*, P.O. Box 6398, New York, NY 10128.

Are you a psychotherapist?

A social worker? In any one of the helping professions? Plan to attend the First International Conference on Judaism, Feminism and Psychology, "Creating a Shelter in the Wilderness," October 29 – November 1, 1992, in Seattle. For general information: *Kayla Weiner* (206)343-0828. To receive a call for papers, contact *Rachel Josefowitz Siegel* (607) 273-2028.

Common Road To Justice: A Programming Manual for Blacks and Jews

describes hundreds of successful intergroup social action and community involvement activities, cultural exchanges, freedom celebrations, Black-Jewish dialogues, and includes essays on the history and current state of the Black-Jewish alliance, step-by-step instructions for implementing programs in your community, contact people and a comprehensive list of education and information resources. 238 pages. \$7.95 from *Marjorie Kovler Institute for Black-Jewish Relation, Religious*

Action Center of Reform Judaism, 2027 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Connect with Jews in Budapest and Prague.

Trips to Israel via El Al Airlines can now include en route stops in these and other Eastern European cities. Package tours to Eastern Europe begin at \$1395 per person. Call *Isram World* (212) 661-1193 or (800) 223-7460.

The impact of women in

public office and the ways they address pressing human needs like health care, children and family issues, and women's rights issues is the subject of an unprecedented survey of women and men serving in state legislatures across the U.S.A.. *Center for the American Woman and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ* 08901; (908) 828-2210.

WRITE

A writing workshop for

Jewish women who want to explore their feelings about their heritage and their lives. "Generating Memories/Remembering Generations" can be booked directly by contacting author *Leslea Newman*, 20 Orchard Street, Northampton, MA 01060, 413-584-3865. Leslea also offers a workshop "What Are You Eating/What's Eating You." and is seeking non-fiction first person accounts about what we as women do with food. Ten page maximum, payment in copies. Include 50 word bio and SASE. Deadline June 15, 1992.

Find a pen pal.

The phenomenal response to a request for a pen-pal published in the Israeli women's magazine *At* inspired a nonprofit organization whose goal is to encourage letter writing as a means to friendship, understanding and perhaps even matchmaking among Jews. A

booklet in English lists would-be correspondents in seven age categories from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Great Britain, Finland, Germany, Holland, India, Switzerland, and of course Israel. Write to: *International Jewish Pen-Pal Service / P.O. Box 18,000 / Jerusalem, Israel.*

BODY POLITIC

Women and AIDS is a brochure that is remarkable for its frank and explicit information on how to practice safer sex. Written for a college population, it is available at bulk rates; a single copy for review is free. *The American College Health Association*, P.O. Box 28937, Baltimore, MD, 21240-8937; (410) 859-1500.

Healing after abortion:

Folklorist/artist/writer collecting for anthology in progress: artworks, rituals, poetry, stories, personal experiences (written or on cassette tape) from women who have experienced and found ways to heal grief after abortion. How do we reconcile our feelings, our politics, and our spiritual beliefs in a hostile political climate? Also interested in hearing about grief and healing from women who relinquished children through adoption. Confidential if requested. Send SASE to: *Heather Bohannon* at 2565 Riverside Drive, #1G, Columbus, OH 43221-3647; (614) 486-4763.

Homosexuality and Judaism: the Reconstructionist

Position, published in 1992 (\$5.00) written by a study commission of lay and rabbinic leaders forms the basis for "Homosexuality: A Reconstructionist Workshop Series" (\$7.50) which includes eight workshops on such topics as: what we know and how we learned it; gender socialization and discomfort about homosexuality; experiences of

gays and lesbians; mistreatment and negative stereotyping directed at Jewish and at gay and lesbian people; Jewish textual sources on homosexuality, AIDS and discrimination against lesbians and gays. Add \$1.50 shipping and handling for the first book and \$.50 for each additional book. From *Reconstructionist Commission on Homosexuality, Church Road and Greenwood Avenue, Wyncote, PA 19095*.

Hemlock is Poison for Society is an attempt to present an ethical alternative to the suicide handbook on the best seller list. Send for a list of books and tapes available on the subject of death and dying from the *National Institute for Jewish Hospice Publications Department, 247 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, #21, Palm Springs, CA 92262*.

TEACH

Teach in a new 550 student school established to serve the Jewish population of Budapest. Teachers (including retirees and those on sabbatical) in all areas of elementary and high school level academics may apply for positions. Familiarity with the Hungarian language is desirable. Salaries are competitive with U.S.A.; family relocation assistance is available. Send curriculum vitae to: *Credential Committee, The North American Endowment School, c/o The Endowment for Democracy in Eastern Europe, 237 Park Avenue, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10017; (212) 867-4773*.

CARE

Long term care weighs heavily on women of all ages. If we are not immediately concerned for ourselves, as present and future caretakers we worry about our parents. Researchers, private industry experts, Congressional staff and policy analysts addressed leaders of women's organizations in 1991. Read their comments in a 27-page booklet, \$5.00 (includes postage) from *B'nai B'rith Women, 1828 L Street, NW, #250, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 857-1320*.

SEPHARDIC CELEBRATIONS

Voyages to Freedom: 500 Years of Jewish Life in Latin America and the Caribbean

dramatizes a little known branch of the Jewish diaspora, and illuminates migration, family and communal life, economic and cultural development, and the relationship between Jews in the New World and their non-Jewish neighbors. The traveling exhibition is displayed on 20 full size panels. For rentals contact: *Rabbi Morton M. Rosenthal, 823 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017; (212) 490-2525*. To purchase a smaller



Molly Picon, performing in Buenos Aires, c. 1935

version of 16 posters mounted on 4 kiosks, contact: *Jay Kaplan, New York Council for the Humanities, 198 Broadway, New York, NY 10038; (212) 233-1131*.

The Society of Crypto-Judaic Studies has established a data base to gather as much anecdotal information as possible about the "Hidden Jews" of the American Southwest, those who were brought up to secretly light Sabbath candles and keep other Jewish practices while remaining Catholics. Eventually the Society will publish a journal. Contact: *Dr. Stanley Hordes, HMS Associates, Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, 1375 Santa Rose Drive, Santa Fe, NM 87501; (505) 983-6564*.

Do you have an elderly parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle who has moved to the sunbelt? A fee-for-service, personalized geriatric care management consultation program under the auspices of Jewish Family and Children's Service, and Handmaker Jewish Geriatric Services of Tucson, is designed to deliver medical care, honest, caring and competent housekeeping or home care services, and to relieve some of the anxieties of geographically distant family members. *Sarah Cohen, Director, Project ASSIST, 1011 North Craycroft Road, #404, Tucson AZ 85711-7313; (602) 795-0300*.

GIVE TZEDEKA

Help Jews behind bars.

The Sephardic Program Resource Guide is designed to assist in programming to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. It includes a bibliography, conferences and events, exhibitions, media materials, lecturers, and travel tours. \$7.50 (includes postage and handling) from *JCC Association, Sesil Lissberger, 15 East 26th Street, New York, NY 10010-1579*.

Both performers and fans of Judeo-Spanish songs can participate in a survey by ethnomusicologist *Judith R. Cohen*, from the University of Toronto Faculty of Music, also founder and lead performer of the Gerineldo Ensemble. For a questionnaire or more information: *Dr. Judith R. Cohen, 751 Euclid Avenue, Toronto, ONT. M6G, 2V3, Canada*.



Judith Brin Ingber dances "Una matica"

the Sephardic music and dance company, *Voices of Sepharad*. To schedule a performance during their tour, contact: *Judith Brin Ingber, 4209 Basswood*

Dona Gracia

Mendes Nasi, was a Converso woman and central figure in Spanish Jewish history who helped other Jews escape persecution at the time of the Inquisition. Her work as a rescuer and later as a builder of the Jewish settlement in Tiberias, is celebrated in a performance piece by

the Sephardic music and dance company, *Voices of Sepharad*. To schedule a performance during their tour, contact: *Judith Brin Ingber, 4209 Basswood*

WEAR IT

A medallion sculpted by artist *Elizabeth N. Weistrop* depicts the Lion of Judah on one side guarding the Hanukkah menorah — symbol of freedom to worship in the Jewish faith, and the heroic figure of Moses as he descends from Mount Sinai bearing the tablets with the Ten Commandments (\$109). The next time your group is honoring someone — male or female — consider a piece of Judaica of this sort rather than another plaque. *Heirloom Sculptures, P.O. Box 248 Half Moon Bay, CA 94019; (800) 950-9297*.

— compiled by Naomi Danis

Congregation *Devar Jonah* of the Washington Correctional Facility is seeking Jewish enrichment. If you can supply a Torah, prayer books, ritual objects, library books, Judaic videos and movies, kosher food or a new typewriter, contact: *Rabbi Laurence Aryeh Alpern, Washington Correctional Facility, P.O. Box 180, Lock II Road, Comstock, NY 12821*.

Adopt and preserve a symbolic piece of the deteriorating 317-year-old Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam. The Dutch government which recognizes the synagogue as a historic monument has granted \$1.7 million, covering a portion of the estimated costs, additional individual sponsors are

needed. American Friends of the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, (212) 486-3154.

HILARY'S TRIAL: THE ELIZABETH MORGAN CASE. A CHILD'S ORDEAL IN AMERICA'S LEGAL SYSTEM

by Jonathan Groner. *American Lawyer Books/Simon & Schuster, 1991.*

ON TRIAL: AMERICA'S COURTS AND THEIR TREATMENT OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN

by Billie Wright Dziech and Charles B. Schudson. *Beacon Press, 1991, paper.*

This is a fairy tale in which all the grownups are monsters and the prince never comes. The facts of the case have become part of the folklore of the age, well-known to anyone even minimally familiar with *People* magazine.

Two highly educated, strong-willed, obsessive, totally mismatched, and none-too-stable people — plastic surgeon Elizabeth Morgan and oral surgeon Eric Foretich — beget a daughter. They separate. The mother accuses the father of sexually abusing the child. A panoply of judges, lawyers, psychiatrists and miscellaneous experts of varying backgrounds, training, and proclivities become involved. None can agree on what really happened. The child's life becomes centered on psychiatric evaluations, stressful visitations, and anatomically correct dolls.

The mother goes to jail rather than comply with judicially mandated visits between child and father. In the ultimate contempt of court, she arranges for the child to disappear. She is attractive, Harvard-educated, and media-savvy. She wins the public relations battle. Congress passes a special act to spring her from the slammer. Three years later, private detectives hired by the father locate the child. She is living in New Zealand, in the care of her maternal grandparents — two psychologists, the father a former testing expert for the C.I.A. — whose own mental health leaves much to be desired.

What makes *Hilary's Trial* interesting is that, to a large extent, it can be read as a kind of exoneration of the maligned father—or at least an acknowledgment that there may be some justice on his side. The author, Jonathan Groner, is a former federal prosecutor who was drawn to the material out of professional curiosity rather than personal experience. He admits he began his book with a “conventional” bias toward Morgan, but says

“stubborn facts” caused him to come to a different conclusion about “the course that events *probably* took” (emphasis mine). He, like virtually all the players in the drama other than the principals, admits to no certainty.

In a careful, thorough, and — in the best sense — lawyerlike manner, Groner tries to present a balanced picture of each event that contributed to the escalating horror story:

- Morgan noticing that Hilary's thighs are red after the child has returned from an early visit with Foretich and his parents (before suspicion of abuse had become an issue) and pointing this out to her father. His instant response: “This child has been molested. Somebody, Eric or Vincent (Eric's father), has put his penis in between her thighs and rubbed it.” Morgan takes Hilary to the hospital emergency room. The diagnosis: diaper rash.

- Morgan photographing Hilary putting crayons in her vagina to illustrate aberrant behavior allegedly provoked by Foretich. (Concerned that the film was misloaded, Morgan drove to her office to get another camera and then asked the child to reinsert the crayons for a second photo session.) Several doctors who subsequently noted a thickening of Hilary's vaginal lining — and

not all did — said it could as well have been caused by crayons as a penis.

- Foretich's daughter from a previous marriage also alleging sexual abuse by her father, which she then denies; and her paternal grandmother explaining that the five year old could have learned about the sexual acts she ascribed to her father from a babysitter who played “doctor” with her and told her in detail what she did with her boyfriend.

Each allegation by Morgan is countered by a cross-allegation by Foretich; each finding of abuse by a psychologist or physician is countered by an opposing conclusion by another expert known for a different take on the subject; each instance of abuse described or alluded to by Hilary (as reported, for the most part, by Morgan) is countered by statements the child allegedly made to other people to the effect that she was lying about her father to please her mother.

Groner himself — so assiduous in pointing out pre-existing bias in others — could be seen to have a bias of his own: the Foretichs confided in him fully; the Morgans shut him out. The reader, like all those charged with making judgments in the case, must come to her own conclusion about credibility.

What emotional calculus begins to surface in the relationship of a grandmother and granddaughter when the latter realizes that her mother was never supposed to have been born?

This edited excerpt is from Naomi Lowinsky's *Stories from the Motherline: Reclaiming the Mother-Daughter Bond, Finding Our Feminine Souls* (Jeremy Tarcher Books, 1992), a book that, bridging the gap between mainstream psychology and goddess spirituality, encourages women to reclaim their female ancestors.

This is the story of my grandmother's failed abortion, her attempt to murder my mother in her womb.

It is 1919, in Germany. She is almost forty. She has five children, the last of whom was born just last year. Now she is pregnant again. I can imagine how she feels, how her spirits sink; yet another pregnancy. So soon? Isn't there some way to stop this endless stream of babies?

She does not know the fate that lies in store for her. . . In a few years her oldest daughter will die of diabetes at age 10. One summer her sons will be killed on a ski trip by an unseasonable avalanche. Then Hitler will come to power. . .

Today, all she knows is that she cannot bear the thought of yet another pregnancy, yet another child. . . She does not get her murderous way, that furious day in late winter, hurling her body down the stairs of her home. And so one late summer day she bore my mother; not knowing that in her failure to miscarry lay the continuity of her biological line; not knowing that she would feel a special bond with my mother; not knowing that after all the deaths and all the losses, the birth of my mother's first child would bring a sense of meaning back to her life. I am that child.

Groner's claim of objectivity rings true to me, despite what some may find an overly sympathetic portrayal of Foretich's parents. He has pulled together a raft of relevant information and presented it intelligently and, in my opinion, fairly. His grant of a certain validity to Foretich's point of view is, at the very least, a corrective to Morgan's own book on the case, *Custody* — the two books should be read in tandem by all interested both in this particular case and in the larger issue of the sexual abuse of children.

Another piece of required reading on this topic is *On Trial*, by Billie Wright Dziech and Wisconsin Circuit Court Judge Charles B. Schudson. This book looks at the way courts have historically treated claims of sexual abuse of children, up to and including the Morgan-Foretich affair, and concludes that in most cases the legal system inflicts its own form of abuse on children who may have already suffered unspeakable crimes — crudely and cruelly subjecting them to the merciful rules of an adversarial system designed for adults.

Humanely, the authors argue that new rules and procedures must be developed. Hearsay evidence, videotaped interviews, and testimony brought into the courtroom via closed-circuit TV should be admissible to protect children from having to confront their alleged abusers. If young children must appear in open court, they should be allowed to testify while sitting on the lap of a trusted person. And, perhaps most important, all those involved in such cases — lawyers, judges, psychologists, social workers — should be attuned to the unique ways in which children at different stages of development perceive the world and express those perceptions.

— Deborah Solomon

FUNNY WOMAN: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FANNY BRICE

by Barbara W. Grossman. Indiana University Press, 1991.

It is almost a classic rags to riches story: a Jewish girl, born in 1891 to immigrant parents, tests her luck at the age of 13 by singing in a Brooklyn talent show. She wins, and begins a nearly unrivaled career as a vaudeville, and later radio, star.

Although Fanny Brice died in 1951, her memory has been kept alive by stage and screen portraits; in the 1970s, Barbra Streisand played Brice in both *Funny Girl* and its film sequel, *Funny Lady*. Here, historian Barbara Grossman gives us a whole volume about the public and private Brice, as well as the social, cultural and political milieus in which she lived.

Grossman describes Brice's ascent to celebrity status by performing "Coon" and "Yid" songs — material that today sounds shockingly racist and anti-Semitic. Often in blackface and with an exaggerated accent, Brice ridiculed Jews and African-Americans to the endless delight of audiences forced to accommodate new neighbors and co-workers. Brice's inimitably crafted, stereotyped characters, perfectly mimicked dialect, and ungainly movements brought joy to thousands, in Ziegfield's *Follies* and beyond.



Fanny Brice

Characters like Sadie Salome, a silly would-be Salome dancer, gave Brice a stage vehicle to poke fun at both Jewish wannabes and other social climbers. So did the character of Baby Snooks, a radio persona Brice created in the late 1930s, a lovable, but endlessly naughty two year old. While Brice always preferred the stage to radio (her humor relied a good deal on the physical), Baby Snooks remains to this day a Bricean classic.

The transition from ethnic swipes to other themes occurred by the year 1913, at which point stereotyping Jews had become unacceptable, and Brice adapted her material to new standards of decency. Along the way, Brice had to deal with the fact that she herself was labelled. Her nose-job is part-and-parcel of her larger striving to be more "universal": she was a woman in a man's field, a single mother in a world of couples, a visibly Jewish personality in an environment of W.A.S.P. gentility and attractiveness.

On the personal side, Grossman describes Brice's three marriages, as well as her relationships with theatre greats like David Belasco, Billy Rose, Florenz Ziegfield, Irving Berlin, Bob Hope, Al Jolson and Blanche Merrill.

Although Brice never did achieve her deepest goal (of being taken seriously as a dramatic actor), her reputation as a tough, fiery, earthy, versatile, brash woman and brilliant comedian lives on. Norman Katkov, the man Brice's family engaged as her biographer, describes her as a woman to be reckoned with, "who sat like a queen and could talk like a truck driver." She was also, truly, a very funny woman.

— Eleanor Bader

CEREMONIES OF THE HEART: CELEBRATING LESBIAN UNIONS

edited by Becky Butler. The Seal Press, Seattle, 1991.

In this anthology, twenty seven lesbian couples describe their ceremonies of commitment, including the decisions that led to these, and their impact on participants' lives since. The cultural sources of these ceremonies are as diverse and varied as their participants, and range from more-or-less traditional Christian weddings, to Wiccan handfasting rituals, to Jewish ceremonies. The forms that these ceremonies take are similarly diverse: some are huge public affairs planned months in advance with attention to every last detail (from the invitations to the dress); others are spontaneous, private demonstrations of commitment made between two women in the company of a small group of friends or alone.

Jewish ceremonies include an interracial wedding with Gospel music under a *chuppah* (Jewish wedding canopy); a *Hanukkat HaBayit* (housewarming) which invokes the *shekhina* (female presence of God) to honor the act of two women creating a Jewish home together; a "recommitment ceremony" by two longtime lovers; and a *Brit Ahavah* (covenant of love) modeled after a liberal Jewish wedding ceremony.

Many women agonized about how to include in their ceremonies relatives who had not come to terms with their lesbianism. While dealing with parents is a challenge for any wedding couple — lesbian or heterosexual — accounts of dealing with parents are among the most poignant in this volume.

Lesbian relationships do not receive support from the legal system. This lack of recognition in the eyes of family, culture, and polity figures as an important reason for having a ceremony. As Deborah Johnson put it, "If you're heterosexually married, and you haven't lived, or even spoken with your spouse for two or three years, you're still considered married . . . With gay and lesbian relationships, there are no such definitions. Our relationships have only the significance that we give them."

In each instance, these ceremonies enabled couples to step further out of the closet than ever before. Rosanne Leipzig and Judy Mable describe negotiations with the artist who made their *ketubah* (marriage contract), the jeweler who engraved their rings with the words "*ahuvot chayim*" ("life partners"), and the man who sold them *kippot* (skullcaps) printed with their names. Rosanne writes that in the process, "We began to have the feeling that by doing all this we were starting to participate in the process of healing. People who had never

Did you know that a Jewish woman's dowry, in turn-of-the-century Germany, very often determined where she would end up living?

This excerpt is from *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* by Marion A. Kaplan (Oxford U. Press, 1992), a fascinating reconceptualization of German-Jewish history which is both fact-filled and scholarly as well as eminently readable (Kaplan's sources include cookbooks).

The size of the dowry regulated the geographic area in which a woman would settle. With a generous endowment, women could hope to remain in or move to attractive locations, usually cities. The fewer resources a woman had, the more likely it was that she might have to move to a smaller town. In 1906, for example, a young woman with substantial dowry of 30,000 marks could leave her tiny village (of 900 people) and "move up" to a small town where her marriage had been arranged to a man with a "solid middle-class income," a trader in vinegar and dyes.

In 1910 a woman from Regensburg with only 12,000 marks had to relocate to a tiny village. Her dowry could interest only a man of middling means in a less desirable location. It was commonly concluded that when a city woman moved into a village, it was due to a small dowry. This "downward" geographical mobility was unique to brides: it was the price they paid to maintain their class position, when dowries were inadequate. Men rarely moved from large to smaller towns for any reason. They either imported wives to their small towns or migrated to larger cities in search of better business and marriage opportunities. Conversely, while brides moved to smaller places, single Jewish women rarely moved to larger cities on their own. As a result, many more women than men of marriageable age lived in the small towns and villages. This probably caused an inflation in the size of dowries needed to lure a diminishing supply of men. It is also likely that many families decided to migrate to urban centers, when it became clear that daughters could not find suitable partners in their hometown. Thus property relations affected the family's geographic mobility: not only business, educational, and cultural opportunities, but family marriage strategies as well, contributed to the lure of urban life for Jews.

before recognized their encounters with gay people began to see us as living, breathing human beings."

There's a paradox here which runs through many of these stories: by appropriating a ceremony which is regarded by many lesbians and gay men as the most powerful symbol of privilege that heterosexual culture has to offer, some feel better able to challenge the very thing which oppresses them. (For this reason, I found Rosanne and Judy's description of their *Brit Ahavah*, which relies on Jewish cultural authority more than any other, to be the most moving selection in the book.)

This volume will be helpful to anyone who is considering a ceremony of commitment, as well as to clergy who are increasingly challenged to take a position on officiating at such ceremonies.

It is significant that this, the first volume of ceremonies created to honor the lesbian lifecycle, addresses a ritual which so closely resembles marriage. By focusing on the similarities between heterosexual women and lesbians, *Ceremonies of the Heart* can play an important role in building understanding between both groups. Let us hope that it also inspires future volumes which honor the

lesbian lifecycle for the ways in which it differs from that of heterosexual women.

—Christine Balka

FRIDA KAHLO: THE BRUSH OF ANGUISH

abridged and translated by Marilyn Sode Smith. Chronicle Books, 1990.

Ten years ago, we didn't know her name. Now, after the scholarship of a few pioneering art historians, Frida Kahlo seems indispensable and irrefutable as a unique, beautiful force in modern painting. How did we live without her?

Kahlo, born in 1907 near Mexico City to a Mexican mother and a father of German-Jewish descent, was the victim at age 18 of a near-fatal bus accident, beginning what would be a lifetime of surgery, convalescence and physical difficulty. Her marriage at age 22 to the 43-year-old muralist Diego Rivera (who also claimed a Jewish ancestor), began a passionate, roller-coaster partnership, interrupted once by divorce, then re-kindled.

Her paintings, generally small canvasses (and seemingly even smaller in contrast to her husband's wall-sized murals), are brave and original psychological narratives of emotional and physical pain. There's the

painting of a deer, studded with arrows and wearing Kahlo's face. There's her self-portrait, crying, while Diego's portrait shines on her forehead like a ghostly cameo. There's the self-portrait where the palette she uses is her heart, and the paint her own blood.

Sound grim, eh? Well, here's the power of Frida Kahlo — they aren't. Like a small jewelry box with a big dream inside, a Kahlo painting is full of the artist's spirit — her pride in her survival, her persistent inventions of herself; they seek out truth and dignity, and therefore never feel hopeless. Kahlo invented herself off the canvas as well, dressing in traditional native costumes of embroidered blouses, layered skirts, and jewelry — an arresting mix of radical, orthodox and folk, a fabulously handsome character of the art world until her death in 1954.

What remains controversial about Kahlo is how much autobiography should be read into her paintings. Because she is a woman, do we falsely assume that she is telling her own story? Male painters are judged on their ability to transform the world through paint—the premise being that honesty is a more "domestic," less worldly affair. Indeed, the arguments surrounding Kahlo's work comprise a microcosm of many of the questions of feminist scholarship. Whose standards are we using? Why have we loved her at first sight?

Zamora's book may blow your mind with its many handsome reproductions and photographs, may have you calling the artist by her first name, may make you itch to visit her house-turned-museum in Coyoacan (which I highly suggest). A real page-turner, with accurate, sensitive text, it is easily read in a devoted sitting.

As yet, no one has written about Kahlo's relationship to her Jewish ancestry, but there's definitely material there. In 1933 she and Rivera attended exhibitions and dinners in New York to counter Hitler's rise; in 1951, at the bottom of her portrait of her father, she inscribed, "... who always fought against Hitler. With adoration, your daughter, Frida Kahlo."

—Jessica Greenbaum

DEBORAH SOLOMON has worked as an actress, attorney, newspaper editor, science writer and documentary film producer. She lives in Newbury, Vermont where she currently works as a freelance writer. CHRISTINE BALKA is an editor of *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish*. ELEANOR BADER is a freelance writer living in New York City. JESSICA GREENBAUM is a poet and an editor of *Choice Magazine Listening*, a service providing audiotapes of selected magazine articles for the visually-impaired.

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mothers. Or maybe this is a product of the more democratic atmosphere in Jewish homes.

The mother felt that the criticisms of the son were an expression of their closeness, and she told me she was glad he felt close enough to tell her what he thought. Despite his complaints about her—she continued to worry.

Over time, the household had become highly conflictual, with the father constantly working to restrain the mother from telling the son of her worries and concern for him. The mother and father inevitably ended up arguing between themselves. When the father failed to stop the mother from talking to the son, the son would himself explode at his mother, and a yelling scene would ensue. The father felt he couldn't live this way any longer; the mother was upset that her family was in such chaos.

Asking the son to leave was not an option that the mother or father felt they could employ, firmly believing that kicking him out would represent non-support of their son.

Since the mother's worrying was not appreciated, I asked

the family to explore its shtetl history. Both sets of grandparents were immigrants from Russia, and the parents were the products of the kind of immigrant mothering that produced very successful children. The father found his wife's worrying and complaining too reminiscent of his own mother, and felt he had to protect his son so that the latter could have the chance to explore what kind of work he really wanted to do in life—something the father felt had been denied him in his own life. As for the mother, she felt trapped in her worrying, but experienced it as being out of her control.

I then explained to the family the magical properties of worrying in the shtetl. As therapeutic homework, the father was asked to listen daily for at least 15 minutes

to the mother's concerns and worries. He was to reassure her of his hopefulness about the son's finding himself. He was to share with his wife the story of his own difficult struggle to fulfill both the dreams of his own mother as well as his own dreams. I directed

the son to find a temporary job and a place to live. I explained the latter as being necessary so that the son would have built-in solitude in which to figure out his life. With this explanation, the parents felt they were supporting the son (rather than withdrawing their support) through the act of asking him to live elsewhere.

I instructed the son to call his mother for lunch weekly in order to give her "active worrying" time with him as a way to "protect him." The son was to hum an old Yiddish song which the father knew and sang when he himself was young and his own mother's worrying got on his nerves. But this humming was not to be done in a disrespectful way—rather in a way which let both the son and the mother know that they were part of a long, ancient legacy that was much more powerful than just the two of them. It often made the mother laugh when the son did

this, and she would hum along with him.

A good many months passed and soon the son went confidently off to graduate school in journalism. The mother continued to worry, but now in a proud way tied to her history—without shame, apology or embarrassment. The father, despite his cynicism with the therapy, left telling me he felt things were better not just between his wife and himself, but also between himself and the memories he had of his own Jewish mother.

Lois Braverman is a family therapist and editor of the Journal of Feminist Family Therapy. This appeared in different form in the Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, Vol. 2(2), 1990.

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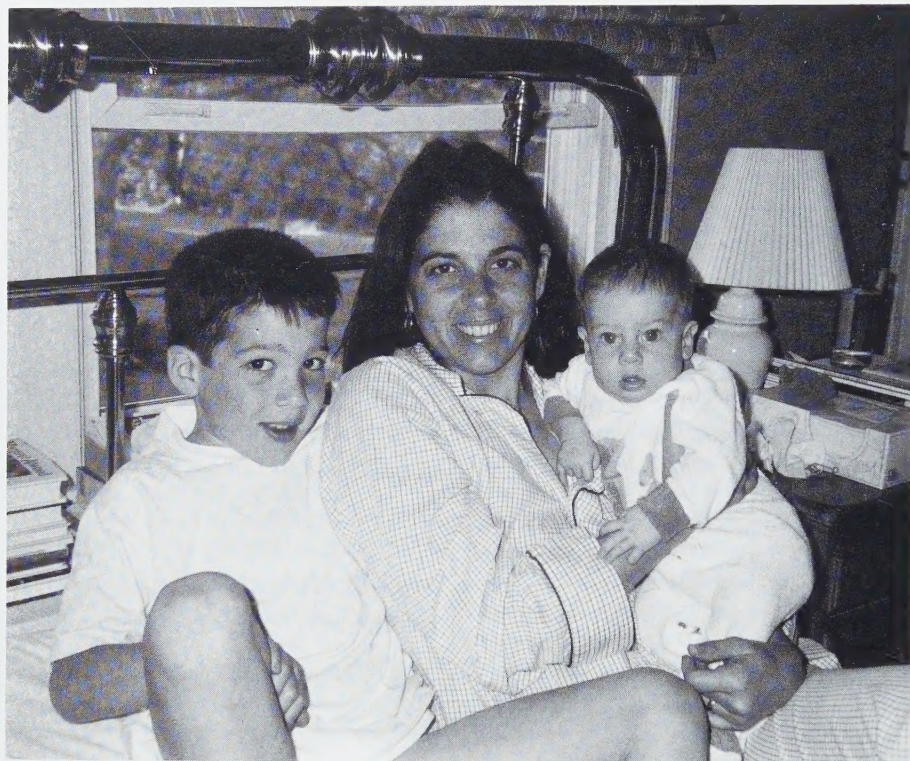
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The Magical Properties of WORRYING



Here the author, posed with sons Michael and Ben, looks relaxed enough, but the editors at LILITH are pretty worried—the kids' vitamins have run out, Michael is not dressed warmly enough for this

chilly spring morning, and he could definitely hurt his *kepele* if he doesn't watch out for that brass bar. We weren't going to mention the fact that infants' eyes can be damaged for life (if not longer) by camera flashes—okay, so now you know. We're also worried about Lois: why isn't she worrying?

BY LOIS BRAVERMAN

American Jewish families have been noticeably cut off from a shtetl philosophy: the healthy appreciation for the magical properties of worrying. "If you worry actively enough, something might come out of it," explain Zborowski and Herzog in their classic book *Life is With People*. Worrying not only proves a mother's love, but it may also have the actual power to "keep the misfortune away."

In today's culture, however, we find adult children noticeably irritated and annoyed with what is now perceived as their mothers' intrusions, nagging, and badgering. In the following case, the Goldman family [not their real name] sought therapy with me, presumably for their 25-year-old son who had dropped out of graduate school, was living at home, and was not interested in "doing anything."

The father was a physician and the mother owned her own small but successful business, which she started after their last child left for college. The other two siblings were working and doing well. None of them had yet married. The family described themselves as anti-religious and perceived themselves as assimilated. They had both Jewish and non-Jewish friends and were very politically active in the larger non-Jewish community.

Although the father was quite concerned with the son's "floating," he seemed equally concerned with his wife's worrying. She worried "too much," he said, and he didn't know what to do to get her to stop. He lectured a bit about how worrying "did not help," and he couldn't quite see the sense in it. The son told me in a sighing, long-suffering, and disdainful tone that his mother "drove him crazy," and that he felt all she did was "nag" him about what he was going to do with his life.

I found the son rude. It was hard to imagine an Irish son talking that way to his mother. I thought perhaps the tendency of 1960's popular literature to pathologize Jewish mothers had given more license to Jewish children to be openly critical of their

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